The *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari* and the Historical Ramifications of Comparison

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Abstract: The *Iliad* and *Heike monogatari*, a 14th-century CE Japanese war tale, were both first composed and transmitted in an oral tradition by blind itinerant singers, and both came to exert a profound influence on premodern Greek and Japanese culture respectively. But the *Heike* describes a period for which we have much more historical context than we do for that of the *Iliad*. As such, we can compare the *Heike* (and its rich context) to the *Iliad* and suggest what in the *Iliad* is historical and what is not. This dissertation thus argues, first, that the text of the *Iliad* developed over several centuries through contemporaneous oral and written strands, as the *Heike* did, and that this mixed parentage is responsible for many of the anachronisms and other interpretive difficulties that bedevil the poem. The comparison also casts light on other historical questions, such as how the Greek habit of taking suits of armor as battlefield trophies might have related to the evolution of the hoplite phalanx, much as the Japanese custom of collecting the heads of those they killed in battle did Japanese combat; how conflict between rulers and lower-level aristocrats correlated with an increase in regionalization and the eventual downfall of Mycenaean society in Greece as it did imperial government in medieval Japan; and how the religious associations of these Greek and Japanese tales influenced the elite of their respective societies and might have been used to claim popular support and lend legitimacy to new political regimes.

For Sarah
quocumque ieceris stabit

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long and storied history of the study of Homer, there has been no shortage of attempts to compare the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with the heroic tales of other regions, cultures, and times. The last half century in particular has played host to a greater number of these comparisons than ever before, which can be attributed largely to the efforts of Milman Parry and A.B. Lord, whose own comparative works established with some certainty the basic criteria by which comparisons with the Homeric poems should be made. Parry's influential essays and articles on the similarities between the Homeric poems and those epics performed by the illiterate bards of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia were among the first pieces to convince a large number of classical scholars that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* displayed characteristics marking them as products of an oral tradition. Lord's work continued for a time on the same track, and strengthened Parry's original arguments by compiling more comparative evidence in the form of transcriptions and recordings of poems from the living oral tradition found in the Balkans. Later in his career Lord also championed the comparison of the Homeric poems to a wide range of oral poems from ancient India and Sumeria to medieval England, Ireland, and France; in so doing, he influenced the rise of the entire sub-discipline of oral poetic studies, from which many comparative works have since arisen.[1]

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[1] Finnegan (1977), examined in her reassessment of Lord's theories on oral tradition a wide range of oral traditions throughout the world, including Somalia, Polynesia, medieval England and Ireland, India, China, and Japan. Zumthor (1984) is well known for his study of medieval French poetry and comments on its parallels with the Homeric epics. Foley (1988), (1990), a spiritual successor to Lord, draws on several world traditions to support his take on oral-formulaic theory. Moreover, the journal *Oral Tradition*, founded by John Miles Foley, has featured many articles comparing a wide variety of oral traditions since its inception in 1986. More recently, West (2007) looks at the similarities between the Greek poetic tradition and the many other traditions thought to have been derived from Indo-European, such as the Indian, Persian, Slavic, Celtic, and Germanic.

The need for comparative studies in Homeric scholarship and in the study of Iron Age Greece (~1050-800 BCE), the period of time in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are thought to have been formed and whose culture they likely represent, is particularly acute, for other source material from this "early" phase of Greek history typically ranges from scant to non-existent. Parry's own study of the oral elements of the Homeric poems is a fine example of these difficulties: while even a cursory reading of either poem displays repetitive elements like epithets, stock phrases, and type-scenes, there is no surviving ancient evidence to indicate that these are anything other than the standard, albeit somewhat peculiar, stylistic features of a written tradition. In the absence of such evidence, Parry had to turn to Serbo-Croatian oral tradition in order to argue for the orality of the Homeric poems, and he and Lord drew numerous examples of the same elements found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from the poems of Serbo-Croatian singers. As such, we still lack the sources to prove conclusively that the Homeric poems were created by the extended iterative processes of an oral tradition, since most of the evidence for this theory comes well after antiquity and from a comparative source. But the value of this and other comparative studies of the Homeric poems and other oral tales has been such that the field of oral studies is effectively founded on comparative method, and comparisons of all sorts continue to be advanced in the hopes of expanding our understanding of the Homeric epoch.

Yet left out from these comparisons of the Homeric poems with other works—despite a near overwhelming number of similarities to them—is the Japanese war tale *Heike monogatari* ("*Tale of the Heike*"), which tells the story of the Genpei War of 1180-1185 CE, a conflict that drew the entirety of Japan into the struggle for control of the

realm between two great warrior clans. Perhaps the most profound reason that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have yet to be compared in earnest with the *Heike* is the imperialism of western definitions of the epic genre. Established primarily by Lord himself, these criteria tend to exclude the *Heike* because its text is not pure poetry, but a mixture of prose and poetry, and its textual history a combination of an oral tradition like that found among Serbo-Croatian bards and a written tradition maintained by highly educated priests and court aristocrats. To the careless eye, these differences render the *Heike* unfit for comparison with the "pure" epic poetry of Homer, and as such only a small handful of efforts have so far been made to this end.[2] Beyond this perverse terminological hang-up, however, obstacles both practical and intellectual serve to impede this venture as well: the languages, Homeric Greek and medieval Japanese, are both difficult and different, and Japanese classicists, who would be the most able to perform such work, are few.

But there is much to be gained from a dedicated comparison of the Homeric poems, particularly the *Iliad*, with the *Heike monogatari*. The similarities between the two encompass their thematic elements, content, background, and cultural significance and influence. Moreover, the history of medieval Japan and of the *Heike* as a text are significantly more richly sourced—and, therefore, better understood—than that of Iron Age Greece and the Homeric poems. It is thus possible that there are established, well-sourced facts about the *Heike* and its Japanese context that might illuminate the darkened corners of the Greek world before the Archaic period (~800-480 BCE), granting further insight in a manner similar to the comparative efforts of Parry, Lord, and others.

Before laying out the course of this dissertation, however, it is important to

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[2] Yamagata (1993), (2003), (2011), (2015); van Wees (1995).

expand upon the context and background of the *Heike monogatari* and medieval Japan, a

grasp of which will prove essential to the comparisons undertaken in subsequent

chapters. These comparisons also will proceed based on the assumption that the *Iliad* and

Heike are valid comparanda, and so it is necessary to explore several of the baseline

similarities hinted at above. Finally, given the complexity of comparative work and the

difficulty of attempting to merge two distinct and venerably idiosyncratic fields of study,

we will discuss the methods of the present work, as well as the conventions of style,

translation, and citation that will be used.

The *Heike* and Its Context

The *Heike monogatari* is the most admired specimen of the so-called *gunki*

monogatari ("war tales") popular in medieval Japan. Its subject, the Genpei War, was a

conflict of considerable importance in Japanese history, and represents the culmination of

nearly a century of rising tensions between provincial warriors called *bushi* ("men at

arms")[3] and the cultured aristocracy of the imperial court. The cause of these tensions lay

in the manner in which members of the court and of the imperial family itself had begun

to manage their relationships with provincial *bushi* in the century or two before the

Genpei War. For while court aristocrats typically were assigned to govern Japan's sixty-

plus provinces, few had a liking for being away from the capital at Kyoto, located

roughly in the middle of the main island of Honshu. Governors thus began increasingly

to employ *bushi* to serve as officers and enforcers to aid them in their duties, while they

remained in the capital with the imperial house and other courtiers. In much the same

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[3] Medieval Japanese warriors were known by several titles, samurai ("man who serves") being the most well-known, but *bushi* is the word that best applies to the warriors considered in this study and is also the term preferred by historians of the period (Kawai and Friday [2017] 310-11).

way, members of the imperial family turned to *bushi* to serve as guards and, in times of war, to help them form private armies. The 12th century CE thus was witness to several smaller-scale conflicts, such as the Hōgen Rebellion of 1156 and Heiji Rebellion of 1160, which saw rival members of the imperial family vying for supremacy using forces made up of *bushi* retainers from the provinces. Among these retainers were members of two prominent *bushi* clans, the Minamoto and the Taira, both of which were distant descendants of the imperial family.[4]

The causes of the Hōgen and Heiji incidents revolved around the career of the imperial scion Go-Shirakawa: the Hōgen conflict was effectively an armed succession struggle between then Emperor Go-Shirakawa and his brother, the former Emperor Sutoku, who sought to exercise power from behind the throne, as several of his predecessors had recently done. After Sutoku's defeat and Go-Shirakawa's own abdication, the Heiji Rebellion was sparked when a group of Go-Shirakawa's Minamoto retainers attempted to oust Go-Shirakawa's current favorite *bushi* subordinate, Taira clan-head Taira no Kiyomori, by kidnapping the retired emperor and his son, Emperor Nijō, and then attempting to fight off Kiyomori's allies. When this effort failed, the major figures of the Minamoto clan were executed and the rest sent into exile in the remote provinces of northeastern Honshu, leaving Kiyomori and the Taira as the sole *bushi* house active in the capital region.

Over the next two decades, Go-Shirakawa patronized Kiyomori and the Taira

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[4] In the long history of the Japanese imperial house, sometimes those sons of an emperor not designated in the line of succession would be effectively expelled from the imperial family and given surnames, marking them as members of the nobility. The Taira clan was founded in this way by the grandsons of Emperor Kanmu around 824 CE, and several branches of the Minamoto were first established by the many sons of Emperor Saga sometime in the early 9th century. The branch of the Minamoto featured most prominently in the *Heike*, however, was that founded in the early 10th century by descendants of Emperor Seiwa.

while maintaining political control through the reigns of five emperors (all his sons or grandsons), and the first half of the *Heike* is the story of Kiyomori's unsavory rise to power in this setting. Kiyomori spent the years following the Heiji incident exploiting Go-Shirakawa's influence to rise through the ranks of court government, and eventually managed to inveigle himself into its inner circle by arranging strategic marriages with members of the imperial family. He first offered his sister-in-law Shigeko to be another of Go-Shirakawa's consorts, and later married his daughter Tokuko (also called Kenreimon'in) to the Emperor Takakura, the son of Go-Shirakawa and Shigeko. Through these marriages and his continued influence with Go-Shirakawa, Kiyomori in 1167 achieved the coveted office of *daijō-daijin* ("chancellor of the realm"), which elevated him and his family to a position of importance in Kyoto that, when coupled with the Taira clan's military background, influence with *bushi* in the western provinces, and trade contacts with China, ensured their political supremacy. These developments were later capped by the birth of Emperor Takakura's son, and Kiyomori's grandson, Antoku, who, according to Japanese custom, was to be raised in Kiyomori's house, and whose promised succession to the imperial throne granted Kiyomori power rivalling that of even Go-Shirakawa (the child-emperor's paternal grandfather).

In 1179, the year after Antoku's birth, Kiyomori used threats and physical intimidation to oust his political rivals from their positions in the imperial government, filling these vacancies with his relatives and retainers. He also placed Go-Shirakawa under house-arrest so that the retired emperor might not intervene as Kiyomori pressured Takakura to abdicate in favor of Antoku. With Antoku's ascension to the throne in 1180, Kiyomori's power reached its zenith. But his long path to political supremacy had been

littered with hated rivals and embittered former allies, several among them from the imperial family, and these would soon band together in order to break the power of the Taira.

The Genpei War itself began at the behest of Go-Shirakawa's son, Mochihito, who sought to challenge Antoku's (and Kiyomori's) rule with the aid of some Minamoto remnants and warrior monks from several Buddhist monasteries under the command of Minamoto no Yorimasa. This force's clash with the Taira at Uji to the south of Kyoto ended poorly, with Yorimasa and his sons committing suicide and Mochihito being captured and executed. But the Taira's brazen execution of an imperial prince and retributive attacks on the temple of Miidera managed to attract the attention of the rest of the Minamoto clan, and after a few inconsequential battles in 1181, the Minamoto spent the next year gathering their forces in the northern provinces and preparing for a full-scale attack on Kyoto.

Kiyomori did not live to see his clan's forceable removal from the capital, having died of an unknown illness in 1181—the *Heike* recounts a popular legend that he was so tortured in the final days of his life by the spirits of those he had wronged that anyone who drew too near would be burned and water touching his body would boil (*Heike* 6.7). In 1183, the Taira were at last driven from Kyoto by a large Minamoto force under the command of Kiso no Yoshinaka, and the scattered Taira subsequently fled to the south and west, suffering several defeats along the way as their remaining strongholds fell to the Minamoto. The two sides finally met for a decisive showdown in the spring of 1185 at the sea battle of Dan-no-Ura, near the straits at Shimonoseki separating Honshu and the southernmost island of Kyushu. There the Taira were soundly defeated, and most of

the survivors, to evade capture and ignominious execution by the Minamoto, weighed themselves down with anchors and extra suits of armor and plunged to their deaths at the bottom of the sea.

The Taira clan was thus effectively destroyed at Dan-no-Ura, leaving the Minamoto clan-head Yoritomo unchallenged as he, with Go-Shirakawa's blessing, established a new warrior-led government called the *bakufu* ("tent government")—also referred to as the shogunate after its head, the shogun ("leader of the army"). Although Kiyomori and the Taira did not survive to witness it, they had played a key role in setting the stage for Yoritomo's assumption of supreme executive power, for it was Kiyomori who had first and most effectively overshadowed Go-Shirakawa's imperial authority and taken the reins of government. The advent of Yoritomo's Kamakura shogunate thus marked a new age of warrior rule in Japan, which would endure, albeit with several changes of regime, for seven centuries, and have a profound influence on the nation's history and culture.

The *Heike* was particularly popular with the newly risen warrior elite. While the tale's ultimate origin remains a mystery, it was spread most effectively by a group of itinerant singers called *biwa hōshi* ("lute priests"), who would sing, chant, and recite the tale to the accompaniment of a four-stringed lute called a *biwa*. These variable forms of performance, along with several other qualities of Japanese literature and poetry, account for the difficulty in categorizing the *Heike* as an epic, for although it is certainly, like the *Iliad*, a long tale of a great war fought by legendary heroes, its text comprises a mixture of unmetrical song, metrical poetry, and prose, with multiple transitions from one form to another—sometimes after only a few lines. Part of the reason for this blending of

different types of text is likely because the tale as we know it seems to have been assembled from both oral and written elements: *biwa hōshi*, who were often blind, were largely responsible for the creation and transmission of *Heike* songs handed down through an oral tradition, while sighted Buddhist priests and court aristocrats probably had a hand in creating written versions of the tale intended for individual reading. But in addition to the *Heike*'s mixed textual parentage, the aesthetics of Japanese poetry and song are simply very different from those of Indo-European languages like ancient Greek and most of the other comparanda heretofore examined by scholars of oral tradition. Because the Japanese language allows few consonant clusters, it possesses a natural rhythmic quality, which, although quite similar to that produced by the constraints of meter in Greek poetry, often means the tale can be recited to music in a rhythmic fashion without the need for formal meter. When meter is used in Japanese poetry, it is typically to promote the laconic brevity characteristic of poetic forms like *waka* and *hokku* (later *haiku*), of which the former appears with some frequency in the *Heike*.

These differences between Greek epic and the *Heike* highlight the potential gains of a comparison between the two. This is in part because of the relative age of the two tales: the *Iliad*, generally thought to have been written down for the first time in the 8th century BCE, is nearly three thousand years old, its oldest surviving manuscript fragments dating to the 3rd century BCE. The *Heike*, on the other hand, probably first emerged in written form in the 13th century CE, and its many surviving variant manuscripts date from the 14th to the 19th centuries. These much more recent dates, coupled with the fact that writing and literacy were well established in Japan by the time of the *Heike*'s creation, means that we generally know much more not only about the

Heike itself, but also about the world it depicts and the place it held in later Japanese history. But there are still many more similarities between the two tales and their respective historical contexts that make them worthy comparanda, and these range from their major themes, content, formulaic language, and narrative structure, to their textual and performance history and cultural influence.

Similarities Between the *Iliad* and *Heike*

In terms of theme and content, the *Iliad* and *Heike* have much in common. To begin with, each tale focuses on a great war: the Trojan War between the assembled princes of the Achaean world and the Trojans with their various allies, and the Genpei War, which saw the warriors of western Japan led by the Taira arrayed against those of the east led by the Minamoto.[5] But conflict is not limited just to these simple dichotomies in either tale, and both also examine the quarrels among leaders of the winning side. The argument between Agamemnon and Achilles, for example, is a defining feature of the *Iliad*'s first act, and the driving force behind much of the poem's action. The Minamoto clan of the *Heike* is rife with internal struggles too, first when the clan's head, Yoritomo, and his cousin Yoshinaka come to blows over who will hold Kyoto after the expulsion of the Taira, and later when Yoritomo conspires against his younger brother, the talented general (and eventual hero in a cycle of stories of his own) Yoshitsune. From a literary perspective, emphasis is often given to the sorrow and losses incurred by the losing sides of these great wars, and both tales are tellingly named after the losers of the Trojan and Genpei Wars: Ilium is another name for Troy, and Heike is a

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[5] Because of this geographic division, there were a handful of Taira who fought for the Minamoto, and vice versa.

Japanese approximation of the Chinese reading for the characters that signify the name

Taira (平家).[6] These conflicts and tragedies are played out on a grand scale, and their

pathos and heroic sentiments are magnified by the tales' different type-scenes, which

include large, extended battles, political debates and intrigues, and emotional dialogues

between family, friends, and lovers torn apart by war.

The use of type-scenes in the Homeric poems, along with formulaic language, has

already been discussed at great length by a veritable legion of scholars, Parry and Lord

foremost among them,[7] and such studies formed the basis of Parry's original argument for

the orality of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But formulas and type-scenes also figure

prominently in the *Heike*, and in ways similar to those found in the *Iliad*. In battle

scenes, for example, a relatively common feature is the so-called "dressing of the hero,"

in which the poet or singer describes the appearance of a warrior's armament piece by

piece, such as when Patroclus dons Achilles's armor:

> Patroclus was helmeting himself in flashing bronze.
> First he placed around his legs the beautiful greaves,
> joined with silver fastenings above the ankles.
> Second he donned about his chest the cuirass,
> sparkling and elaborate, of the swift-footed son of Aeacus.
> Around his shoulders he slung the silver-studded sword
> of bronze, and upon it the great shield, huge and sturdy,
> and on his strong head he set the well-wrought helmet
> with a horse-hair crest, and the plumes from above nodded terribly.

[6] Because Japanese is not a Sinitic language, Chinese characters (*kanji*) had to be adapted for use in writing Japanese. The majority of *kanji* thus have at least two readings, a native Japanese reading (*kun-yomi*) and a Japanese approximation of the character's Chinese reading (*on-yomi*). As such, the Japanese reading of 平家 is Taira clan (*Taira uji*), while Heike is the Chinese reading. Similar to the Taira/Heike, the Minamoto clan are also commonly referred to as the Genji, and the protagonist of the 11th-century CE *Genji monogatari* ("*Tale of Genji*"), possibly familiar to westerners, is a fictional member of the Saga branch of the Genji.

[7] Considered in greater detail in Chapter 1, 34-6. The classic work on type-scenes is Arend (1933); see also Lord (1960) 68-98; Reece (2011). Edwards (1992) 284-330 offers an annotated bibliography of the many varieties of type-scenes found in the Homeric poems.

> And he took up two stout spears that fit his hands' grip.[8]   (Hom., *Il.*
> 16.130-9)

Or in the *Heike* when the famous archer Nasu no Yoichi answers a Taira challenge to an

archery contest:

> Yoichi, then in his twentieth year,
> was wearing a dark blue *hitatare*[9]
> trimmed, collar and sleeves, with red brocade
> under green-laced armor. His sword
> hung at his side from a silver ring,
> and the few arrows that the day's clashes
> had left him lifted their eagle feathers,
> black-and-white-banded, over his head,
> in company with a humming arrow[10]
> fletched from both eagle and hawk,
> and tipped with deer horn. Under his arm
> he clasped a lacquered, rattan-wrapped bow,
> and his helmet hung over his back.[11] (*Heike* 11.4)

In addition to these scenes, warriors in both tales will frequently challenge their

opponents by loudly proclaiming their names and genealogies using similar formulas, and

the tales also make constant use of stock formulaic phrases in episodes and other type-

scenes, such as the appearance of rosy-fingered Dawn to signify sunrise in the *Iliad* or the

use of the archaic Japanese phrase "saru hodo ni"—a slippery transitional expression that

means something like "in the meantime"—to indicate the beginning of a new episode in

the *Heike*.

The narrative structures of the *Iliad* and *Heike* also make for another point of

contact: each tale has a relatively straightforward central plot, but the formidable size of

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[8] All translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are my own. I have tried to keep word order as close as possible to the original Greek, but, in cases where the Greek lines feature enjambment, I sometimes move words from one line to the next in order to capture that indispensable element of Greek epic.

[9] A loose, robe-like garment worn beneath armor.

[10] Arrows made with a bulb-like head of hollowed horn or wood that would emit a high-pitched whistling sound when traveling through the air.

[11] Translations of the *Heike* are taken from Royall Tyler's translation, the characteristic lineation of which is discussed in further detail on p. 29.

each work is the result of an aggregation of different "episodes" that, while not essential to that main plotline, provide depth to its characters and historical or mythological background. In both instances, the episodes that seem accessory to the core narrative of the tales might hint at how all the episodes in these works originated: they possibly began as shorter, orally performed mini-tales that only reached their current lengths after a protracted period in which the episodes accumulated and were strung together to form a grander narrative. Also in both cases, the tales came over time to be written down, and it was probably in these written forms that they were expanded to their current imposing lengths. But the sources of these enlarging episodes were likely still the oral traditions, which had associations in both ancient Greece and medieval Japan with blind, itinerant singers who performed to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. As such, the *Iliad* and *Heike* seem at various points in their respective textual histories to have existed in both oral and written forms that interacted in complicated ways.

Perhaps because of the tales' circulation through these two media for several centuries, they also exercised a powerful influence on the culture of their respective regions. Each tale is credited with helping to form a cohesive sense of ethnic and national identity in ancient Greece and Japan: in ancient Greece, a city-state's level of prestige was often determined by its ties to Homeric heroes, and the notion of a Panhellenic expedition against a foreign foe like the Trojans also resonated with the Greeks of the 5th century BCE in the face of Persian invasion. Among the Japanese, the *Heike* likewise served as the basis for many samurai clans' claims of descent from Minamoto and Taira heroes, and the participation in the Genpei War of warriors from all over Japan also helped forge a sense of cohesion between them in the war's aftermath.

Many of these similarities have a direct bearing on each of this dissertation's chapters, and serve as some of the strongest justifications for a comparison of the *Iliad* and *Heike*. But comparative scholarship is a difficult enterprise, particularly when the comparison involves two works from vastly different regions and time periods. I thus lay out the comparative method that I will follow in this study, which also suggests how I have selected the topics and sources for different chapters.

Comparative Methodology

Comparative scholarship, particularly between geographically and culturally diverse subject areas like premodern Europe and East Asia, is still in its relative infancy. Nevertheless, several works show the variety of methodological approaches to comparison of European and East Asian material, an overview of which will help to triangulate my own approach to examining ancient Greece and medieval Japan. Mutschler's recent compilation comparing the Homeric poems with the Chinese *Book of Songs* (*Shijing*),[12] a collection of more than 300 poems from between the 11th and 7th centuries BCE, relies on a collaborative approach for its comparison by featuring chapters by experts in Homeric studies and on the Chinese *Book of Songs*. In explaining the book's approach, Mutschler claims that comparing these works "systematically and exclusively" will help to show "how far this kind of direct full-scale comparison could enhance our understanding of [the texts'] particular characters and perhaps even contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultures to which they belong."[13] A lofty

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[12] *The Homeric Epics and the Chinese Book of Songs: Foundational Texts Compared* (2018). The conventional translation of *Shijing* is "*Classic of Poetry*," and it is unclear why Mutschler has elected to use a different title.
[13] Mustchler (2018) 4.

goal, to be sure, but one made possible in this instance by the assembled learning of more than a dozen scholars with expertise in either Homer or the *Book of Songs*. This approach thus examines both comparanda and seeks to gain insight into them in equal measure, an ambitious aim that, while capable of pointing out new and interesting parallels between the two works, can struggle to provide answers to unanswered questions in either field.

This difficulty stems mostly from the effort required to examine the material from both fields in their necessary depth. In Mutschler's volume, for example, each topic of comparison is divided into three chapters, each by a different author: one for the Homeric material, one for the *Book of Songs*, and another in which the content of the previous two chapters is compared. The effect of this approach is that the scholar writing the comparative chapter essentially summarizes the two subject-specific chapters, comments on their similarities and differences, and offers cautious suggestions of how the two fields might illuminate one another. While the result of this approach is certainly interesting and informative, the majority of the comparative chapters are occupied just with coming to grips with the vast amount of material from the two fields, and the suggestions for how they might shed light on each other are as a result often rather general. As such, a common difficulty of comparative studies like those found in Mutschler is that they too often seem preoccupied with the novelty of comparing, as it were, apples and oranges, which can hinder their ability to make significant headway in furthering our understanding of the things being compared.

Most of the other scholarship comparing the Homeric poems with the *Heike* is by Yamagata Naoko, my only colleague in comparing Homer to the *Heike*, and makes use of

a method similar to that seen in Mutschler's volume. Because these pieces are written by

a single author, they provide shorter, more focused examples of the equal-depth, equal-

measure approach. One article, for example, looks at how spaces are divided between

males and females in the Homeric poems and *Heike*, making note of the similarities and

differences between the Greek and Japanese contexts.[14] But, like the comparative

chapters of Mutschler's compilation, the bulk of the article is focused on the content of

the two tales, and Yamagata's conclusion is spent mostly summarizing their similar

elements. While we thus gain insight into how a particular topic or theme is treated in the

Homeric poems and *Heike*, we do not come away with new insight into the wider context

of either tradition.

     A form of comparative method found much more frequently in a variety of

subjects is one that makes use of evidence from one comparandum to further an argument

about another. Of the very limited number of comparisons of the Homeric poems and

Heike, an article by Hans van Wees uses this approach.[15] Here he examines a handful of

battle scenes from the *Heike* to support his argument that warriors in the *Iliad* tend to

behave in ways that are less heroic than is generally thought. Van Wees's inclusion of the

Heike examples does help to reinforce his points about the *Iliad*, but the argument he

makes is perfectly sound even without the comparative material. Of the article's

imposing 86 pages, fewer than five deal directly with the *Heike*, and the remainder draw

on an abundance of evidence from the Homeric poems and other pockets of Greek history

to support van Wees's argument. As a result, the inclusion of *Heike* material, while

interesting, still feels somewhat unnecessary, since van Wees has here used comparison

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[14] "Male and Female Spaces in Homer and *Heike monogatari*" (2011) 27-41.
[15] "Heroes, Knights, and Nutters: Warrior Mentality in Homer" (1996) 1-86.

to reinforce an argument that can already be made independently of comparative evidence. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this approach, but it does leave the comparative potential of the *Heike* and its Japanese context largely untapped, particularly in light of the rich and complex warrior culture on display in the tale.[16]

      This presents something of a predicament to the prospective comparative scholar, since there are advantages and drawbacks both in examining the two sides of a comparison equally and in using a more-narrowly considered comparandum to advance an argument about one side only. As it turns out, however, one of the most useful guides in this perplexity is Milman Parry, whose comparison of the Homeric poems with Serbo-Croatian oral poetry revolutionized Homeric scholarship and has helped to encourage the popularity of comparative studies. Such a sea change in the field was possible mostly because Parry's comparative method effectively combined the two approaches discussed above. A Homerist by training, Parry over the course of several years of fieldwork observed and recorded many performances by Serbo-Croatian bards, and later used this abundant material to point out formulaic patterns characteristic of oral poetry that can also be found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. While Parry thus examined both the Homeric and Serbo-Croatian evidence in close detail, he did so in order to prove that the Homeric poems were orally derived—not to say anything explicitly new about Serbo-Croatian poetry.

      This study will use a similar method: each chapter will include in-depth consideration of the *Iliad* and *Heike* in their different cultural and historical contexts, but the main focus of my arguments will be the *Iliad* and its historical context and cultural

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[16] Van Wees's article and the *Heike* passages he selected are examined in more detail in Chapter 2, n. 22.

influence. In order to avoid comparison for comparison's sake, I have deliberately where possible endeavored to maintain focus on just the *Iliad* and *Heike*, for while there are several other interesting comparanda in the Greek and Japanese traditions, it is often difficult to incorporate significant treatments of such works without muddling the comparison of our principal subjects—as noted above, examining just two works from different traditions is a formidable undertaking. I will thus occasionally discuss material from the *Odyssey*, a natural companion to the *Iliad* in terms of story, provenance, and cultural and historical context, as well as other Japanese war tales such as the *Heiji monogatari*, *Hōgen monogatari*, and *Jōkyūki*, which likewise share a literary and historical context with the *Heike*, but only when the elements they have in common with the *Iliad* and *Heike* can help to sharpen a chapter's given focus. Finally, to ensure a thorough treatment of both Homeric and *Heike* scholarship, I have sought wherever possible to brave not only the veritable mountain of Homeric scholarship, but also the work by Japanese scholars of the *Heike*, who, because of their own venerable scholarly tradition that has often held the world of Anglophone scholarship at arm's length, have naturally exerted the most influence in *Heike* studies and medieval Japanese history.

There are, however, limitations to the use of comparative evidence, regardless of the method one adopts. Despite the confidence of many Homeric scholars that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were generated by an oral tradition, the fact remains that there is insufficient ancient evidence to *prove* the orality of the Homeric poems, and, as noted above, the validity of oral-formulaic theory thus rests squarely on comparative evidence from outside the poems' ancient Greek context. Similar restrictions must apply to this study, for although the *Heike* and the history of medieval Japan have many fascinating parallels

to offer for comparison with the *Iliad* and ancient Greece, no amount of certainty from scholars of the Japanese tradition can compensate for the gaps in the evidence for the Greek tradition. As such, the role of this comparative exercise is to suggest the possible and, in some cases, the probable, by looking at old questions from new angles and by finding new questions that arise in the course of that comparison.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 will examine the textual and performance histories of the *Iliad* and *Heike*, topics that in both fields have produced the most modern scholarship. After an overview of the trends of Homeric scholarship in the last century, it will outline the complicated textual history of the *Heike*, whose surviving manuscripts attest to nearly 100 variant texts that were developed in both written and oral forms over several centuries. The picture that emerges from this background is that the *Heike*, contrary to the assumptions of many scholars of oral poetic studies, did not cease to be an oral tale after it was first written down. Instead, several of the tale's written variants seem to have influenced the development of its oral heritage, and the oral and written strands culminated in the most popular, "standard" version of the *Heike*, the Kakuichi-bon. This helps us understand the textual history of the *Iliad* because Homeric scholars have long been baffled by the apparent, but largely undetectable, interplay between the poem's oral and written forms. I argue that the *Iliad* likely existed simultaneously in oral and written form for some time before written texts created to help performers memorize and recite the tale came to dominate the tradition, which development led to the eventual demise of oral formulaic composition among Homeric bards. The *Heike* tradition provides a useful model of how this mixed heritage might have come to produce the standard version of the

Iliad, or "Vulgate," with which we are now familiar, and the chapter thus explores how that process might have unfolded, based on the available Greek evidence and appropriate Japanese parallels.

With a model in place for how the *Iliad* and *Heike* may have developed, the remaining three chapters will each explore a different historical issue for which some evidence appears in the *Iliad*, but that benefit from re-examination by comparison to the *Heike*. Chapter 2 will focus on the peculiar ways in which the warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike* do battle, which often centers around the collection of battlefield trophies. For the Greeks, these prizes take the form of armor stripped from the bodies of friend and foe alike, while the Japanese decapitate their opponents and use the heads as proofs of victory. While these behaviors have often been assumed to be literary exaggerations, the historical evidence from medieval Japan shows that generations of Japanese warriors did indeed engage rather enthusiastically in head-taking. Attestations of this behavior in Japan thus provide a helpful parallel for similar, if less substantial, evidence of persistent armor-stripping in the Greek world, and the evidence from the tales and the historical realm suggest that armor-stripping among the Greeks actually served as a powerful influence for the development of the hoplite phalanx that features so prominently in the battles of the Archaic and Classical periods.

Chapter 3 moves back in time to examine the structures of government and leadership present in the *Iliad* and *Heike*, how well these fictional structures might represent actual historical conditions at the time the tales were written down, and how the tales' respective portrayals of leadership might have been influenced by historical events from before their creation. In particular, the chapter compares the surprising weakness of

central leadership and authority in the *Iliad* and *Heike*, as well as the gradual decline and

collapse of imperial authority and government in medieval Japan, with the more

precipitous fall of the Mycenaean kingdoms of Bronze Age Greece. Based on the

similarities found in the tales and among the conditions during these different historical

events, it is proposed that the *Iliad* and *Heike* both reflect the reality of leadership and

authority at the time they were each written down around the 8th century BCE and 13th

century CE, respectively. In both cases, this reveals how the inimical interaction between

central authority and competitive warrior culture led to the downfall of central authority

both in Japan and the Mycenaean world—echoes of which still resound in the verses of

the *Iliad*.

Rather than looking to the tales for reflections of history, the fourth and final

chapter will examine the roles played by the *Iliad* and *Heike* in the religious realms of

their respective cultures. It will explore the rich history of *biwa hōshi* and their

performance of placatory rituals for various types of spirits, as well as how particular

qualities of *biwa hōshi* like blindness and musical technique were believed to grant them

special power over inhabitants of the spiritual realm. Greek bards seem to have had

similar associations with blindness and the divine, and these associations appear to have

granted them a certain degree of religious sanctity. This special status of *biwa hōshi* and

Greek bards also seems to have led to their songs becoming political instruments for the

elites of their respective societies, and this marriage of religion, art, and politics in turn

affected the contexts in which the tales were performed and increased their popularity

and staying power.

Conventions

Because of the focus of this work on the *Iliad* and its ancient Greek context, it has been written with classicists and ancient historians in mind, which means there will be more guidance and background provided about the Japanese material and a general assumption of familiarity on the reader's part with the literary works, authors, and historical figures and events of ancient Greece. This stems not only from my desire to maintain analytical focus, but also because I myself am more knowledgeable about ancient Greek history and literature. For while I am capable of reading modern and medieval Japanese, my facility with the language is not as strong as in ancient Greek or other modern languages, and the process can be rather slow. As a result of this deficiency, I have where possible sought out translations of Japanese scholarship, and employed the services of several colleagues and research assistants with stronger Japanese to provide notes and abstracts of those articles and books for which translations are unavailable. In the case of several pieces of Japanese scholarship that have not been translated and that are particularly important to each chapter, however, I have worked through them myself for a better understanding of their arguments and contributions to conversations about the *Heike* and Japanese historical scholarship. In particular, the works of Hyōdō Hiromi, Kondō Yoshikazu, Inoue Mitsusada, and Fukuda Akira have been most illuminating and useful guides for each of this dissertation's chapters.

In keeping with the intended audience of this work, I will generally tend to follow the citation conventions of classics and ancient history: citations of both Greek and Japanese primary sources will be in-text and parenthetical and list author, work, book, and, for Greek sources, line or, for Japanese works, episode number (e.g., Hom., *Il*. 1.1-

10; *Heike* 1.1). Secondary works will be cited in the footnotes. Greek and Japanese

terms are found frequently in each chapter and will be written in italics and use diacritical

marks for long vowels; translations will also be given in parentheses at each term's first

appearance. Depending on a word's meaning and importance to the topic of the chapter,

some of these translations are also used interchangeably with the original term. Well-

known words whose meanings are already generally understood without translation, such

as phalanx or shogun, will not be italicized or translated, and Japanese terms like these,

along with names of known cities or regions (Kyoto, Tokyo, Kyushu) will not be written

with diacritical marks.

Longer passages quoted from the tales will be given in translation, with the

original language provided in a footnote where relevant. For quotations from the *Heike*, I

have elected to use Royall Tyler's more recent translation, primarily because it attempts

to capture the changing dynamics of the work's text, which shifts frequently between

spoken prose and verse to sung verse in order to convey the text's performative aspects.

Quotations from Tyler's *Heike* will thus reflect these shifts through their formatting:

spoken prose will be written out in standard sentences, while sections of sung and spoken

verse are indented and adhere as closely as possible to the syllable restrictions of the

Japanese poetic forms used in the tale.

In order to adhere to the conventions of Japanese scholarship where possible, I

will also give Japanese names in their traditional order, with surnames listed first and

followed by the given name. In the case of older names such as those featured in the

Heike, the possessive particle *no* is used between the two—thus Minamoto no Yoshitsune

and Minamoto Yoshitsune are identical in meaning. These conventions also affect

citations of secondary scholarship: authors' surnames will always be listed before the

initials of their given names. Special accommodation is also occasionally made for the

morphology of Japanese nouns, which are undeclined and have no separate singular or

plural forms (this information is given by either modifying words or, more commonly, by

context). As such, Japanese terms will not be given English forms when used in the

plural, so *biwa hōshi*, shogun, and *bushi* can each be used to denote a singular or plural.

CHAPTER I: TEXTUAL HISTORY: COMPOSITION, PERFORMANCE, AND TRANSMISSION

Perhaps no aspect of the Homeric question has intrigued or baffled scholars more than that of its textual history. When were the Homeric poems first written down? Who wrote them? Were writer and poet the same person, or separate individuals? These are just a few of the questions that have been asked of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* for millennia, and the entry of oral-formulaic theory into the conversation has served to create several more. Those questions pertaining to the poems' roots in an oral tradition have been of particular interest for some time now, but progress has proved difficult to come by given the extremely limited amount of evidence available from antiquity. Unlike the Serbo-Croatian or even the Japanese tradition, we have no recordings of ancient epic performances—nor even many literary descriptions of them—upon which to base our reconstructions of how Greek bards might have practiced their craft. Given this situation, comparative evidence remains a vital source to the study of how the Homeric poems developed as both performed and written texts.

This chapter will examine the textual and performance history of both the *Iliad* and *Heike*. It will show that the *Heike* tradition is considerably better sourced and understood, and that it features a significantly more robust body of surviving manuscripts, which allows us to trace with some confidence the evolution of the tale from its inception in the decades following the Genpei War through the end of the Edo period (1603-1868 CE). Of particular interest, given our aim of deriving new insight from a comparison of the *Iliad* and *Heike*, is the interplay between the oral and written traditions of the *Heike*, which appear to have existed contemporaneously for centuries as the tale

continued both to be read and performed throughout Japan. Such history can in turn

provide new perspectives on the similar but much less-well-understood interaction

between the oral and written traditions of the *Iliad*, which have often been seen as

incompatible with, if not inimical to, one another.[1]

We will begin with the current state of scholarship on the Homeric textual

tradition, discussing the current scholarly understanding of oral-formulaic composition

and its role in the *Iliad*'s creation and setting down in writing, questions of authorship and

who performed the poem in the centuries following its circulation across the Greek

world, and how the differences between the surviving ancient manuscripts of the *Iliad* are

seen in relation to one another and to the more-or-less standard version of the poem that

has come down to us. An exploration of similar questions in the *Heike* tradition will

follow, which will in turn suggest questions about the Homeric tradition that we are able

to ask and answer. These questions will then be considered in detail, with the hoped-for

result being insight into the nature of the texts we have to work with for this comparative

study of ancient Greek and medieval Japanese history, as well as a sense of what other

questions outside the realm of textual history we might expect to answer through appeal

to the *Iliad* and *Heike* in subsequent chapters.

I.1: Textual History of the *Iliad*

From antiquity into the 20th century, it was commonly held that the *Iliad* was

originally composed in essentially finished form by a poet called Homer.[2] Some scholars

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[1] Lord was among the most vocal proponents of the idea that oral and written poetic traditions cannot coexist (Lord [1991] 23), although he later moderated this view to allow that the Homeric poems as we have them came from the period of transition from oral to written poetry (45-8).

[2] Wilamowitz (1916a) sought to reconcile the various accounts of Homer's life in accordance with his stance that Homer was the earliest author of a composite *Iliad*. Allen (1924) 177 believed that the poems

in recent centuries, inspired by advances in Biblical criticism first applied by the likes of

Wolf in the late 18th century,[3] did begin to approach the Homeric poems with greater

suspicion about how and by whom they were composed, and these Analysts (as they

came to be called) produced works of detailed scholarship in their efforts to prove that

the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were shaped by many creators over an extended period.[4] Those

committed to the idea of single authorship, called Unitarians, maintained that the

thematic unity of the poems and the detailed world-picture they present could only have

been the product of a singular genius, and that, the inconsistencies so painstakingly

compiled by the Analysts notwithstanding, any apparent errors pale in comparison to the

impressive feat of singlehandedly composing such tales in the earliest days of Greek

literary history.[5] The two groups battled to a near standstill through the 19th and early

20th centuries, and it is tempting to see the lull in Analyst scholarship in the early 1900s

as an indication that the inconclusive debate over Homeric composition had by this time

become exhausted: neither the Analysts nor the Unitarians were willing to give ground

based on the state of the evidence then available.

Then came Parry and Lord, and most of the scholarship on the composition of the

Homeric poems since the first half of the 20th century has been driven by their theories.

Following several years of fieldwork in Yugoslavia, Parry established in a series of

seminal articles the rudiments of his oral-formulaic theory, which described a process by

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were assembled by a "great poet" from "a mass of chronicle." Jacoby (1933) also endorsed the single-author theory.

[3] Wolf (1795).

[4] Wilamowitz (1884) is a particularly exhaustive study of the *Odyssey* and an excellent example of the rigor typical of Analyst scholarship. For a history of Analyst scholarship with bibliography, see West (2011a).

[5] Arguably the earliest Unitarian scholar was Nitzsch, who argued against several key elements of Wolf's theories in the first part of the 19th century (see [1830], [1852], [1862]). Among the best later Unitarian scholarship is that of Schadewaldt (1938), (1942), (1965). For a history of Unitarian scholarship with bibliography, see West (2011b).

which illiterate singers composed epic poetry semi-spontaneously through the use of oft-repeated formulaic phrases designed to fit within a poem's meter. The repetition of this individualized and mutable method of composition over several centuries, Parry argued, created an oral tradition that produced the Homeric epics.[6] The evidence for Parry's theory was drawn not from any groundbreaking new ancient material on the Homeric poems, however, but from the still-living oral epic tradition of Serbo-Croatian bards, whose performances he studied and recorded to support his argument that the poets responsible for ancient Greek epic used similar techniques. Before his untimely death in 1935, Parry asserted that the main characteristics of the oral style he had observed in Yugoslavia—and that were present in the Homeric poems—were: 1) the presence in a poem of a large number of formulas; 2) the use of themes to guide the course of the poem's story; and 3) the frequent appearance of unperiodic enjambment—when a sentence or clause is contained in a single verse, but may be modified by clauses in preceding or subsequent lines.[7]

Lord, Parry's assistant during his work in Yugoslavia, picked up where his mentor left off and was responsible for a vast body of recordings of Serbo-Croatian poetry, which he used to provide evidence for further comparative study of the Homeric poems and, later, the epics of other cultures. It was not long after Lord's publication of the groundbreaking *Singer of Tales* in 1960 that he began to be seen as the effective founder of oral-formulaic theory, and he was instrumental in expanding the study of oral epic

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[6] While Parry authored several articles on the Homeric poems and oral-formulaic theory, the most important in advancing oral-formulaic theory were (1930) 73-147 and (1932) 1-50.

[7] Summarized in Lord (1991), who did not believe that the absence of enjambment was a disqualifying factor when evaluating a poem or oral style (26). For Parry's views on enjambment, see (1929) 200-20. Also Edwards (1966) 115-79.

poetry in the latter half of the 20th century. Despite these contributions, however, Lord's

influence did have a certain stifling effect on the study of oral poetry: while Lord himself

elaborated on oral-formulaic theory throughout his long career using the same well-worn

passages of Serbo-Croatian poetry as his evidence,[8] he was ever eager to point out the

perceived weaknesses of other scholars' attempts at similar work and to impose strict and

sometimes arbitrary-seeming definitions for what constituted "oral traditional literature."[9]

And it is in part because of the influence of Lord that a work like the *Heike*, ripe for

comparison as it is, has not been considered in such terms at any length.[10]

The possible negative ramifications of Lord's work notwithstanding, his

scholarship is responsible for opening our eyes to the need to puzzle out the relationship

between the oral and written elements of the Homeric poems. Parry believed the *Iliad*

and *Odyssey* were transmitted, constantly changing, over centuries through oral-

formulaic song, a process made possible by what he referred to as "composition in

performance." This term has come to stand for Parry's idea that poets did not memorize

their songs, but rather used metrical formulas, themes, and type scenes to compose

effectively a different poem in each performance—the variety of poems that would have

resulted from this method of composition is, some believe, responsible for the variations

found among Alexandrian papyri.[11] Lord, a less-fervent believer in composition in

performance, later attempted to account for how such an oral tradition could produce a

fixed written version of a poem, and he proposed that an exceptionally gifted bard, being

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[8] Lord (1960), (1987) 54-72, (1995a) 7-29, (1995b).

[9] See esp. Lord (1986) 467-503 and (1987) 65-71.

[10] Few attempts in general have been made to compare the *Iliad* and *Heike*, all of them by Japanese-speaking classicists. See Yamigawa (1931) 549-58; Yamagata (1993) 1-10, (1997) 1-14, (2003) 34-44, (2011) 27-41, (2015) 43-56.

[11] In particular, Nagy (1996a), (1996b).

an heir to this venerable performance tradition, dictated the poems to an amanuensis,[12] much as the Serbian guslar Avdo Međedović dictated a poem of 12,000 lines to Lord.[13] This explanation for the Homeric poems' origin has since seen fairly widespread acceptance,[14] and even those who reject the dictation theory tend to accept that the poems are the product of oral-formulaic composition.[15] As such, oral-formulaic theory, held up almost entirely by comparative evidence from other, better attested oral traditions, is widely seen as the most compelling explanation for at least the early formation of the Homeric poems, and the general consensus posits that the poems existed in some form through oral performance until they were first written down.

There is, however, far less agreement on an approximate date for *when* the poems were written down. Linguistic evidence places both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* before Hesiod and most of the so-called Homeric *Hymns* in the mid-to-late 8th century BCE: Janko has argued that the *Iliad* appeared in writing between 750 and 735,[16] and Powell for between 800 and 720.[17] Other scholars have placed the writing-down of the poems in the 7th or even the 6th centuries, the former to correspond with references to and depictions of scenes from the *Iliad* in literature and other works of art that appeared by about 630,

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[12] Lord (1953), restated in (1991) 38-48. Lord's dictation theory and those of several other scholars are summarized well in González (2013) 15-70.

[13] Lord, trans. (1974).

[14] For example, Jensen (1980) 92; Janko (1982) 188-92, (1998) 135-67; West (1990) 33-50; Reece (2005) 43-89.

[15] Nagy (1996b) 26-63; González (2013) 42-70.

[16] Janko (1982) 200. Janko's statistical analysis, which tracks the evolution of dialects and forms in early Greek poetry, remains one of the strongest arguments for dating the Homeric poems. For recent criticisms of the work, as well as examples of Janko's enduring confidence in his findings, see González (2013) 24-9.

[17] Powell (1991) 217; Haslam (1997) 81. Powell's ambitious claim that the Greek alphabet was effectively invented in order to write down the *Iliad* has not met with the same acceptance as Janko's more conservative approach, but his work does present convincing evidence that there was certainly a strong link between the advent of Greek writing in the 8th century and the circulation of the Homeric poems throughout the Greek world.

along with other archaeological considerations,[18] and the latter to fit with the so-called

Pisistratean recension or the establishment of the late 6th-century Panathenaic Rule,

which is supposed to have mandated that poets competing in the poetry contest at the

Panathenaic Festival recite the entirety of the *Iliad* in relay, beginning at the point in the

poem where the previous competitor left off.[19] Few dare to go beyond these boundaries,

but some theories posited by Oralists, like that of Nagy, leave open the possibility that the

poems existed in a relatively fluid oral state throughout the Classical period (~480-323

BCE) and were not written down until the Hellenistic period (~323-31 BCE).[20]

Oral-formulaic theory has also exerted significant influence on the debate over

who was responsible for the first written text of the *Iliad*. Analyst scholars generally

seem to have viewed the possibility of the Homeric poems being the product of oral-

formulaic composition as a validation of their long-held support for multiple authorship.[21]

Initially, Unitarians felt vindicated by the rise of oral-formulaic theory—while they were

effectively compelled to accept the role of oral tradition in the process of Homeric

composition, oral-formulaic theory as conceived of by Parry and Lord also mandated that

the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* be the result of individual performances. This line of reasoning

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[18] Friis Johansen (1967); Burkert (1976) 89; Kullmann (1992) 264; Taplin (1992) 5-21; van Wees (1994a) 1-18, (1994b) 131-55; Crielaard (1995) 274; Dickie (1995) 29-56; West (2011c) 16-25. Powell (1991) 186-220 examines in detail arguments for dating the poems after the 8th century and provides bibliography, while West (1998) lists several works written in the mid-90s, when dating the poems to the 7th century was particularly popular. Graziosi (2002) 91-2 summarizes the controversy of dating the *Iliad* and collects the major arguments.

[19] A position that fell much out of favor in the later 20th century. See Davison (1955) 13-21; Sealey (1957) 351.

[20] Nagy (1996a) 42 believes transcript-like texts (i.e., librettos) of the poems first appeared between the mid-6th to the late 4th centuries; González (2013) supports this view and argues in favor of it at great length.

[21] Kakridis (1949); Sealey (1957) 334; Bowra (1963) 44; Kullmann (1981) 5-42; Clark (1986) 379-94; Edwards (1990) 311-25; Willcock (1997) 174-89; Finkelberg (2012) 80-95.

allowed several scholars, including Lord, to assert that a single poet was responsible for the versions of the Homeric poems familiar to us.[22]

     This question about the authorship of the Homeric poems quite naturally leads to speculation about the existence and identity of Homer himself. Analysts, given their general belief that the poems are made up of different chronological layers created by multiple poets over time, are of course quite skeptical of a historical Homer. But scholars of varying allegiances have offered several other theories, among them that Homer was the name of the "inspired" poet who dictated the poems at the time they were written down;[23] that he was a mythical uber-bard, similar to those found in other oral traditions;[24] that he was a distant (and likely fictitious) ancestor of the Homeridae, a group of poets tied somewhat mysteriously to the Homeric poems and their associated tradition;[25] or that there was no author or poet named Homer, but instead the name signified a poetic movement or "bardic function."[26] Like so much else in Homeric scholarship, however, we lack the evidence needed to make a decisively convincing argument on the issue. Sources for Homer's identity are sparse, even by the standards of the early Archaic period, and our most detailed accounts, the *Certamen* and the ten *Lives of Homer*,[27] were likely written no earlier than the 2nd century BCE, with the latter consisting of little more

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[22] Kullmann (1984) 307-23 summarizes the state of Neo-Analyst and Oralist scholarship after the widespread influence of Parry's and Lord's theories. See Janko (1990) 326 and West (1990), (2011) 5 for other bibliography.

[23] Lord, (1953) 124-34, (1960) 128, (1991) 38-48; West (1990) 33-50; Powell (1991) 229-30; Ruijgh (1995) 26; Janko (1998) 1-13, (2012) 34.

[24] Foley (1999) 37-65.

[25] Sealey (1957) 315. West (1999) 364-82 provides more recent bibliography.

[26] Nagy (1990) 72 n. 99, (1996b).

[27] The *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* depicts the legendary poetic contest between Homer and Hesiod at the funeral of the Euboean king Amphidamas, and likely contains earlier material despite its 2nd-century CE date. For scholarly considerations of the *Certamen*, see: Nietzsche (1870) 528-40; Wilamowitz (1916b) 396-413; Kirk (1950) 149-67; Dodds (1952) 187-8; Vogt (1959) 193-221, (1962) 103-13; West (1967) 433-50; Richardson (1981) 1-10; Heldmann (1982); O'Sullivan (1992); Erbse (1996) 308-15; Graziosi (2002) 168-80.

than collections of popular anecdotes about Homer's life and epigrams attributed to him.[28]

Beyond these meager offerings, several tantalizing instances of possible self-reference

scattered throughout the Homeric poems, *Hymns*, and other works attributed to Homer in

antiquity offer little in which we can have confidence.[29] Based on current evidence, then,

it is just as probable that Homer lived and composed the poems that bear his name as it is

that he was the product of myth, and oral-formulaic theory can do little more for this

problem than suggest that if Homer existed, he was likely a practitioner of oral-formulaic

composition. As such, Homer's identity is of most consequence with regard to the so-

called Homeridae ("the sons of Homer"), who are inextricably tied to Homer and seem to

have played some role in the propagation of the Homeric poems throughout the historical

Greek world.

Opinions vary on the identity of the Homeridae. Scholars in the first decades of

the 20th century and earlier interpreted the meaning of the name Homeridae literally, and

believed them to have been the actual descendants of Homer who performed the *Iliad* and

Odyssey as they inherited them from him.[30] The popularity of this position seems to have

waned since the widespread acceptance of oral-formulaic theory, however, particularly

since the idea of a group of performers, not blood descendants, explicitly associated with

Homer lends itself remarkably well to another argument, that there was an epic oral

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[28] Similar to the *Certamen*, the *Lives* probably feature material from earlier periods, but also include
Roman-era elements that confine them to later dates. For more on the *Lives*, see: Wilamowitz (1916a) 413-
39; Allen (1924) 11-41; Jacoby (1933) 1-50; Schadewaldt (1942); Lefkowitz (1981) 12-24; Markwald
(1986); West (2003) 296-317.
[29] Perhaps the most famous instances of suspected self-reference are the depiction of the bard Demodocus
in *Od.* 8.62-70 and the reference to a blind poet from Chios in *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 165-73, and these are
credited with possibly originating the popular belief that Homer was blind. Needless to say, sixteen lines of
poetry do not make for strong evidence of Homer's historicity or blindness, although several ancient
sources seem to have agreed with this representation (Thuc. 3.104.5; Schol. *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 172; Aelius
Aristides 34.35; *Cert.* 315-21). See also Ready and Tsagalis (2018) 8-12.
[30] See n. 25.

poetic tradition in Greece. Most contemporary views on the Homeridae thus see them at the very least as a group of singers with some sort of loose, possibly regional connection to Homer,[31] or perhaps as a more official organization of professional performers who recited the Homeric poems and might have played a role in the production and circulation of the poems in written form[32]—there were probably other similar groups of performers, possibly competitors, active at the same time, such as the Creophylae.[33] Like their namesake, however, ancient evidence for the Homeridae is difficult to come by, since they are usually mentioned only in passing in literature.[34] The picture of the Homeridae and their activities that scholars have so far put together places them squarely in the Archaic and Classical periods, a time when they were strongly associated with Chios[35] and recitation of the Homeric poems and *Hymns*,[36] and were also reputed to have preserved the life history of Homer and his works.[37] Although each of these elements is interesting, recitation of works attributed to Homer has received the most attention from scholars, many of whom believe that such recitation was the primary function in antiquity of a category of performers called rhapsodes (*rhapsōdoi*),[38] among whom the Homeridae and Creophylae were later numbered.

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[31] West (2001) 15-17, (2011c) 69.

[32] Allen (1924) 42-50; Sealey (1957); Davison (1963) 218-20; Jensen (1980) 56-7, 122-3, 131-3; Nagy (1996b); Janko (1998) 13; Graziosi (2002) 18-49. Uniquely, Fehling (1979) 193-210 endeavored to prove that the Homeridae were a fictitious creation of Pindar.

[33] Janko (1992) 31; Graziosi (2002) 201-6. Burkert has perhaps written the most extensively on the Homeridae and Creophylae—see (1972) 74-85, (1979) 53-62, (1987) 43-62.

[34] The following passages mention the Homeridae in some way: Pind., *Nem*. 2.1 (and scholia); Pl., *Phdr*. 252.b.4, *Ion* 530.d.7, *Resp*. 599.6; Isoc., *Hel*. 65.1; Strab. 14.1.35; Plut., *Mor*. 496 3.4; Ath. 1.40.9, 15.8.17; Pseudo-Lucian, *Demosthenis Encomium* 17.14; Aelius Aristides 46.228, 47.327; Harp., s.v. Homeridai; Eust. on *Il*. 1.6, 1.22, 1.399, 2.390, 2.709, 3.485, 4.17.

[35] Dyer (1975) 119-21; Janko (1992) 31, (1998) 1-13; Graziosi (2002) 78, 201-34.

[36] Davison (1955) 13-15; Sealey (1957) 312-55; Thomas (1989) 21 n. 22; Janko (1998) 1-13; West (2001) 6-7, (2011) 69-75; Graziosi (2002) 201-34.

[37] Allen (1924) 45-50; Davison (1963) 218-20; West (1999) 372.

[38] Sealey (1957) 312-55; Jensen (1980) 112-27, 145-8, 152-4; Nagy (1996a) 67; Janko (1998) 4-5; West (2001) 18.

The recitation-rhapsode connection has drawn so much attention because recitative rhapsodes are thought to have been distinct from another type of ancient performer, singers called *aoidoi*. *Aoidos* is the term used internally in the Homeric poems for bards who presumably sing epic poetry, and is derived from the verb *aeidein* ("to sing"), which famously appears in the first line of the *Iliad* and is also used in the *Odyssey* for the performances of *aoidoi*. Although the terms *aoidos* and *rhapsōdos* are used in essentially the same way to denote poetic performance, no one has yet been able to discern precisely why *aoidos*, the older of the two terms that was used exclusively for poetic performance before the fifth century, fell out of favor and was replaced by *rhapsōdos* in the Classical period.[39] Despite this uncertainty, a common view on this shift is that reciters of Homeric poetry like the Homeridae were called rhapsodes because they recited poetry memorized from written texts, and that this name-change was meant to distinguish them from the earlier *aoidoi* who composed and performed their own poetry without the aid of writing.[40] Proponents of this position have been heavily influenced by oral-formulaic theory, not only because it potentially helps explain how the Homeric poems came to be written down, but also why we find virtually no trace of the Greek oral epic tradition in historical sources: at some point after the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written down, the techniques of oral-formulaic composition died with the last *aoidoi*, who were succeeded by groups of *rhapsōdoi* who relied on and maintained written texts of the poems in their repertoires.

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[39] Graziosi (2002) 19-36 summarizes the *aoidos-rhapsōdos* controversy, and notes that while the term *rhapsōdos* does not appear in literature before Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *rhapsōdoi* appear to have engaged in activities similar to *aoidoi* and it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the two. See also West (2010) 1-13; González (2013) 331-431; Ready and Tsagalis (2018) 2-8.

[40] Allen (1924); Burkert (1987) 43-62; Ford (1988) 300-7; Murray (1996) 96; Janko (1998) 5-9; Graziosi (2002) 18-50.

This explanation is favored in large measure because of its attractive connection to another significant mystery of the Homeric textual tradition: the relationship between the Homeridae, the Homeric poems, and the 6th-century Athenian tyrant Pisistratus. Since antiquity, scholars have wrangled over the possibility of a "Pisistratean recension"—that is, that Pisistratus and a specially selected editorial board altered the text of the *Iliad* to reflect better on the Athenians and their exploits in the Trojan War, and that this text would go on to exercise significant influence on the final version of the poem, which indeed shows signs of the influence of Attic diction.[41] Some other versions of the story cast Pisistratus as a sort of editor or anthologist gathering together parts of the *Iliad* and arranging them for the first time,[42] while yet others have him inducing Homer himself to hand over the rolls containing his poems so that Athenian greatness might be interpolated into their verses.[43] Although intriguing, the likelihood of a Pisistratean recension is low. It is impossible to find any mention of the recension before the fourth century BCE (Arist., *Rhet.* 1.1375b30), and the notion of Pisistratus assembling an editorial board is itself redolent of the literary culture of the Hellenistic period, which was characterized by the activities of editors, anthologists, historians, and mythographers at the Library of Alexandria. Moreover, the version of the story most popular with modern scholars, that Pisistratus interpolated and reorganized a preexisting text, was entirely unknown to Alexandrian scholars of the Hellenistic period and is attested for the first time by Cicero (*De or.* 3.137).[44]

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[41] See Davison (1955) 1-21; Burkert (1987) 43-62; West (1988) 36-40; Shapiro (1992) 53-75; Nagy (1996a) 65-112. Jensen (1980) 207-26 and Janko (1992) 29-32 review ancient testimonia of the Pisistratean recension and collect more recent bibliography.

[42] Collected in Janko (1992) 31-2.

[43] Collected in Janko (1992) 29-30.

[44] Graziosi (2002) 207 n. 16 collects testimonia for Pisistratus and Solon as the sponsors of Athenian editions of the Homeric poems, the authenticity of which she sincerely doubts.

It seems more likely, however, that there was a connection between the Homeric poems and Pisistratus's son, Hipparchus, who is reputed to have invited the Homeridae to recite their signature poems at the Panathenaea of 522, resulting in the permanent institution of a Homeric recitation contest as part of the festival.[45] This in turn is said to have brought about the so-called Panathenaic Rule—to the effect that each reciter had to take up where his predecessor left off—which most scholars are confident is genuine and was introduced in the later 6th century because of its attestation in the fragments of earlier historians, the writings of 4th-century authors like Plato and the orator Lycurgus, and a possible hint at the practice from Thucydides (Thuc. 3.104).[46] The rule serves as an important clue both for the state of the Homeric poems at the time, for its stipulations could not have been met without a standard text of some sort for competitors and judges to follow, and its attestation in the 5th and 4th centuries—in which its tie to the Pisistratids generally persists[47]—makes a late 6th-century date and a tie to Hipparchus seem more plausible. The Pisistratids are thus said to have invited the Homeridae to preside over the first Panathenaic recitation competition, so some scholars hold it to be not improbable that the written texts of the Homeric poems maintained by the Homeridae served as the basis for the official texts of the Panathenaea. This facilitated the institution

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[45] First attested in Pl. [*Hipparchus*] 228B. For other testimonia, see Davison (1955) 13-21; Shapiro (1993) 92-107.

[46] Ancient testimonia of the Panathenaic Rule are collected in Davison (1963) 219-20 and Nagy (2011) 113-14. Although scholars generally agree on the reality of the Panathenaic Rule, the date of its implementation in either the 6th or 5th centuries has been debated. See Davison (1955) 1-21; Sealey (1957) 343-51; Friis Johansen (1967); Kannicht (1982) 70-86; Hurwit (1985) 245-64; Shapiro (1989) 43-6; West (1999) 382, (2001) 17-19; Nagy (2002) 39-69; González (2013) 382-92.

[47] All ancient testimonia of the rule link it with the Pisistratids except for that of Dieuchidas of Megara, who claims it was instituted by Solon (*FGrHist* 485 F 6 = Diog. Laert. 1.57). For more on this discrepancy, see Davison (1959) 216-22; Nagy (1996a) 104-5.

of the Panathenaic Rule,[48] and would also help to explain to some degree the outsize

influence of Attic linguistic elements on later standard texts of the *Iliad*.[49]

The centuries that followed the reign of the Pisistratids and the start of the

Panathenaic Rule saw an increase in the popularity of, and apparent reliance on, written

texts of the Homeric poems. It is possible that oral-formulaic composition was still being

used by poets to compose the Homeric *Hymns* and other later works of epic into the 6th

century,[50] since testimonia about the *Iliad* only from the 5th century onward tend to

emphasize both recitation and written texts, the latter of which became increasingly

important in the 4th and 3rd centuries with the founding of the Library of Alexandria.

There scholars collected over time a staggering number of manuscripts and fragments of

the poem, some copies of which have survived to our own time from as early as 300

BCE.[51] These manuscripts have been divided by modern scholars into several categories

based on their provenance, and include 13 manuscripts from "men of letters" (*kat' andra*),

more than 66 "city-texts" (*kata poleis/hai politikai*) drawn from city-states throughout the

Greek Mediterranean, 52 different versions of what we call the Vulgate (*koine*), as well

as a group of texts sometimes dubbed the "wild" papyri because of their more drastic

divergences.[52]

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[48] Davison (1955) 1-21, (1963) 219-20; Foley (1990) 21; Haslam (1997) 81-3; Nagy (1996a) 42; West (2001) 18-19. Sealey (1957) 349 argued that the Panathenaic Rule did not require a written text, but only a written list of episodes.

[49] West (1967) 11-13; Janko (1992) 34-7; Haslam (1997) 83-4; West (2001) 18-31. For examples of Atticisms in the *Iliad*, see Wackernagel (1916).

[50] Foley (1990) 21; Janko (1998) 3; Nagy (1996a) 40-2.

[51] Haslam (1997) 60-3 lists some of the major editions of Homeric papyri, along with commentaries; there are, however, only about 40 Homeric fragments from before 150 BCE (64), most of which are available in West (1967).

[52] Foley (1990) 24; Haslam (1997) 70-1, (2005) 142-63. West (2001) 33-85 examines each of the groups in detail and also provides an annotated list (86-138) of the 1543 Homeric papyri known to scholars at the time of publication. For a more detailed survey of the city-texts, see Citti (1966) 227-67.

Much painstaking work has been devoted to comparing these manuscripts and fragments to the standard text of the *Iliad*, but the general consensus among scholars is that the papyrus fragments differ in generally inconsequential ways, especially considering the vast number of them that survive (and which represent only a tiny fraction of those that existed in antiquity). While pre-Vulgate texts like the wild papyri and city texts do diverge more significantly from our standard text, they do so mostly through a greater number of verses that elaborate on those present in the Vulgate. As such, the plus-verses of these manuscripts do not actually alter the narrative structure or plot of the *Iliad* in any significant way and only serve to slow down that narrative with extended ornamental metaphors or tangential details about characters.[53] We owe much of our knowledge about these manuscripts of the *Iliad* to the efforts of third- and second-century Alexandrian librarians, such as Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus, and it is assumed that their editorial work on the poems had some influence on the Vulgate text, dated to around 150 BCE, that has come down into the modern era, although the extent of that influence is much debated.[54]

To sum up, there are three main elements of Homeric textual history of which we are fairly confident. First, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are products of an oral tradition that might have persisted into the 6th and possibly even the 5th century. Second, that they were written down by the 6th century, and that these written versions remained relatively fixed from this point on. Third, that there was something approximating a Vulgate text of the *Iliad* by the time the scholars at the Library of Alexandria began collecting Homeric

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[53] West (1967) 11-12; Haslam (1997) 66-70.
[54] See West (2001) 33-85 for the librarians, their sources, and recensions for which they might have been responsible.

manuscripts, and that the Alexandrian manuscripts and quotations of Homer found in other ancient texts do not contain enough differences to suggest that the core story or language of the *Iliad* changed substantially between the Hellenistic period and the time of its original transition to written form.

Yet scholars are still baffled by the period in between the poems' formative, oral existence and the later one in which they existed chiefly as written texts—the centuries when oral and written versions of the poems coexisted and likely shaped each other through "various kinds of unfathomable interplay."[55] Current Homeric scholarship is ill-equipped to grapple with the question of how oral and written traditions could have influenced one another. So-called Neo-Analyst scholarship, although happy to use the comparative evidence favored by Oralists, is still limited by the scope of its primary evidence: works like Janko's are indeed impressive and valuable pieces of scholarship, but they are nevertheless awkward in trying to reconstruct an oral tradition through *written* texts produced by that tradition and then extensively edited over a span of more than 2,000 years. Oralists, on the other hand, have spilled far too much ink arguing over theoretical questions like what constitutes "orality," and have an understandable tendency to rely too heavily on the Serbo-Croatian oral tradition studied by Lord as a model for how Greek epic oral tradition functioned and evolved. While the Serbo-Croatian tradition is an invaluable comparandum for the early oral tradition of Greece, it falters when we turn our attention to the oral-written period of Homeric textual history because of its lack of an analogous written tradition. But the *Heike monogatari*, which has its own remarkable similarities to the Greek world of the Homeric poems and a well-

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[55] Haslam (1997) 79-80. See also Cassio (2002) 114.

documented history of interaction between its oral and written traditions that has

continued into modernity, seems well suited to pick up where the Serbo-Croatian model

leaves off and can perhaps help us more accurately measure the depths of the *Iliad*'s oral-

written history.

I.2: Textual History of the *Heike*

Although the precise origin of the *Heike* remains uncertain, its evolution over

time from a grouping of loosely related oral tales to a complex and thematically unified

written work is significantly better attested than that of the *Iliad*. The first mention of the

Heike in a datable historical source comes from the *Tsurezuregusa* ("Essays in Idleness")

of Yoshida Kenkō, a monk and former court aristocrat of the 14th century CE, which

recounts that a court-educated priest named Yukinaga wrote the *Heike* during the reign of

Retired Emperor Go-Toba (1198-1221) and taught it to a blind singer named Shōbutsu,

whose unique singing style became the standard method of delivery in *Heike*

performance thereafter.[56] Scholars earlier in the 20th century were generally persuaded

that Yukinaga was responsible for the first *written* version of the *Heike*,[57] but few now

believe that his tale was also the source of the *Heike*'s oral performance tradition. This is

primarily because an abundance of oral elements like formulaic and musical repetition

appear in many of the *Heike*'s variant manuscripts,[58] suggesting that the written tale

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[56] *Tsurezuregusa* 226.

[57] Yamada (1911); Ishimoda (1957); Nagazumi (1956); Tomikura (1964); Butler (1966a) 44-51, (1966b) 17-18; Ruch (1990) 533.

[58] Because of the considerable differences between Homeric Greek and the poetic Japanese used in the *Heike* and other war tales, there are few direct parallels between the *Iliad* and *Heike* with regard to oral elements like those identified by Parry and Lord (see n. 7). Formulaic language is found in abundance in the *Heike*, however, and there are notable formulaic similarities between the dressing scenes, name-announcing, and descriptions of fighting found in the *Iliad* and *Heike* (all of which are examined in greater detail in Chapter 2). For oral formulaic elements in the *Heike* and its performance tradition, see Butler

originated as a transcription of an earlier oral version or as a compilation of many

episodes that were at one point shorter individual stories, and that these episodes were

performed throughout the 12th century by professional singers.[59] Thus, Yukinaga might

have produced the first written *Heike*, but he did so by frequent appeal to the existing oral

tradition that had been accumulating since even before the outbreak of the Genpei War.[60]

Unfortunately, relatively little information about oral performance in Japan

survives from before the 13th century, a difficulty familiar to scholars of Greek oral

poetry. What we do know, however, is that *biwa hōshi* ("lute priests"), Buddhist priests

who chanted and sang poetry and tales of various sorts to the accompaniment of the four-

stringed *biwa* lute, are first attested in a 985 entry from the diary of Fujiwara Sanesuke,

which mentions summoning several *biwa hōshi* and tipping them for a performance.[61]

From this point on, *biwa hōshi* make fairly regular appearances in other aristocratic

diaries and some court documents, and are also mentioned in the *Genji monogatari*,[62]

better known to westerners as the *Tale of Genji*. Some have speculated that before their

first historical attestation, *biwa hōshi* originated as ritual singers called *kataribe*, who

performed exorcisms and other important religious functions,[63] and these speculations are

based on a few associations of *kataribe* that have continued even into the 20th century: a

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(1969) 93-108; Rutledge (1993) 344-6; de Ferranti (1995) 149-74, (2003) 131-52, (2009) 122-5; Watson (2003) 107-14; Tokita (2015) 63-90.

[59] Butler (1966) 42-4. Given its unwieldy size, the *Heike* was performed in full only on rare occasions; this mode of performance was, however, sufficiently well known to have its own name (*ichibu Heike*) (Watson [2003] 116-18; Tokita [2015] 64).

[60] Hyōdō (1985). Because the *Heike* accounts for much of the 12th-century history of the Taira and Minamoto clans, some of the episodes that would eventually coalesce as the *Heike* are thought to have developed alongside those of smaller tales like the *Hōgen* and *Heiji monogatari*, completed versions of which date to as early as 1190 CE—just five years after the conclusion of the Genpei War (Ichiko [1984] 5.399-401, 424-6; Varley [1994] 50-3, 67-8; Oyler [2006] 18-19).

[61] Hasegawa (1967) 69.

[62] *Genji monogatari* 13 (Tyler, 263).

[63] Butler (1966a) 42; Fukuda (1981); Ruch (1990) 535-6; Hyōdō (2009) 31-6; Tokita (2015) 60. Ritual placation and other rites associated with *biwa hōshi* are explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

blind singer in the Higo region, Yamashika Yoshiyuki, was recorded performing

placatory rituals and rainmaking ceremonies in the 1960s.[64]

We are not entirely certain of how *biwa hōshi* might have branched off from some

of these functions and first came to be associated with performance of the *Heike* and

other *monogatari*. It does seem that by the 11th century *biwa hōshi* had effectively

divided themselves into two distinct groups: singers of folk tales and religious fables who

were trained and sponsored by Buddhist temples,[65] and others, particularly active in the

southernmost island of Kyushu and the rough frontier lands of eastern Honshu, who

accompanied armies into battle and sang tales of great warriors and their exploits.[66]

While these two groups would undoubtedly have composed songs for very different

audiences, the intersection between religious, courtly, and warrior tales in the later

standard text of the *Heike* suggests the importance of both in the development of the tale's

oral tradition. It also grants us insight into the possible origins of the various manuscript

traditions, which likely sprang from different schools of singers and eventually came to

be woven together in the standard version of the tale, the Kakuichi-bon ("Kakuichi

book"), named after its creator, the famous *biwa hōshi* Kakuichi.

Multiple accounts from the medieval period tell of the historical Akashi Kakuichi,

whose distinctive version of the *Heike* is attested as early as the 1330s in diary entries

from Kyoto.[67] Kakuichi's popularity seems only to have increased in subsequent

decades. He and a disciple of his are even mentioned in the *Taiheiki*, a later war tale of

gigantic size that was itself inspired by the *Heike* tradition, where they are said to have

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[64] De Ferranti (2009) 125-41.
[65] Butler (1966a) 42-3; Hasegawa (1967) 69; Ruch (1977) 300-6, (1990) 537; Oyler (2006) 15.
[66] Butler (1966a) 42, (1969) 104-7; Ruch (1990) 536.
[67] For example in Nakahara no Moromori's *Shishuki* (Tomikura [1967] 284; Hyōdō [2000] 43-5).

been summoned to perform an episode from the *Heike* for a high-ranking warrior

official.[68] Kakuichi's role as a master of *Heike* performance is only one element of his

varied career, since he is also credited with reorganizing the musical performers of the

tōdō-za, a guild that taught various professional skills to the blind,[69] as well as with

securing patronage for the guild from the Ashikaga shogunate, thus increasing the *Heike*'s

popularity with the nobility—several documents from the 13th and 14th centuries show

that the *Heike* was performed in the homes of aristocrats by *biwa hōshi*—and ensuring

the *tōdō-za*'s control over its performance for the next four centuries. Kakuichi's career

culminated in his completion of the Kakuichi-bon in 1371, and a colophon attached at the

manuscript's end bears quoting in full:

> Ōan 4, third month, fifteenth day (1371): Jōichi Kengyō finished taking down
> from my dictation my complete, secret text of the twelve books of *Heike
> monogatari*, with the addition of *Kanjō-no-maki*. Unworthy as I am, I am now
> over seventy years old and cannot expect to live much longer. After my death, a
> disciple of mine might forget this phrase or that and provoke a dispute on the
> subject. I have therefore had this reference text written down in order to forestall
> any disagreement. Under no circumstances may it be given or even shown to
> anyone outside my line. Let no one but my direct disciples copy it, not even my
> associate teachers and their disciples. May whoever violates these injunctions
> suffer divine chastisement.
>
> -Kakuichi, a follower of the Buddha.

This colophon, which most *Heike* scholars accept as genuine,[70] reveals several important

details about the state of *Heike* performance in the later half of the 14th century. First, it

states explicitly that the full twelve books of the text, plus the *Kanjō-no-maki* ("Initiate's

Book"), were dictated to a sighted, literate member of the *tōdō-za*—Kengyō was one of

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[68] *Taiheiki* 3.350.

[69] Beyond musical performance of various types, such skills would eventually include acupuncture, moxa massage, and money-lending. Groemer (2001) gives a more detailed description of the *tōdō-za* and collects bibliography.

[70] E.g., Hyōdō (1993) 55-82; Bialock (1999) 77; Oyler (2006) 14-15.

the highest ranks attainable in the guild, meaning that Jōichi must have been a veteran

guild member even if he was not blind. This speaks further to the inextricable link

between oral and written in *Heike* performance, even among the members of a guild of

nominally blind performers.[71] Jōichi's literacy is made even more interesting by the

statement that Kakuichi's manuscript should serve as a guide to future disciples in order

to ensure they use the exact wording of his version of the tale. This is typically

interpreted as signifying that recitation by memorization was the primary method of

Heike performance by this point in time, whereas earlier centuries had seen the tale

performed in a semi-spontaneous fashion similar to oral-formulaic performance.[72]

Finally, Kakuichi's insistence that his version of the text only be shown to or copied by

his direct disciples hints at the existence of other schools of *Heike* performance that likely

used different versions of the tale. Other sources show this to be a fact, for a rival Yasaka

(or Jōkata) school existed in Kyoto at the same time as the Ichikata school, which

Kakuichi himself founded, and its members were reputed to have used the Yashiro-bon

Heike, a variant of the tale earlier than Kakuichi's, as the basis of their performances.[73]

  We need not speculate too much about the influence of the earlier *Heike* variants

like the Yashiro-bon on Kakuichi's text: another formidable advantage provided to us by

medieval Japan's comparatively robust source-base is the capacity to trace the lineage of

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[71] While our knowledge of Kakuichi's life is relatively limited, it seems that he was a priest before losing his sight (Tomikura [1952] 37-46; Takagi [1959-60] 32.5-51; Ruch [1990] 531-41), and that he probably learned *Heike* performance from *biwa hōshi* affiliated with a Buddhist temple complex like Enryaku-ji, located on Mt. Hiei outside of Kyoto (Oyler [2006] 15), or Shoshazan to the west in Harima province (Tomikura [1952] 37-46; Takagi [1959-60] 32.5-51; Butler [1966a] 50-3, (1966b) 8-9; Ruch [1990] 536-8).

[72] For the evolution of *Heike* and *gunkimono* performance, see Butler (1966b) 5-51; Ruch (1977) 279-309; Fukuda (1981); Gomi (1987); Matsuo (1996) 35-63; Hyōdō (2009) 31-6; Tokita (2015) 53-89.

[73] Tomikura (1952) 37-46; Butler (1966b) 7; Ruch (1990) 539; Bialock (1999) 77; Hyōdō (2000) 40-5; Tokita (2015) 59.

Heike manuscripts from their culmination in the Kakuichi-bon back to when they first began being written down in the 13th and early 14th centuries. What follows here, then, is an overview of the different *Heike* manuscripts from both the read and sung groupings—for despite the clear-seeming distinctions between read and sung texts, the Kakuichi-bon, itself typically cited as the culmination of the sung text line, incorporates many elements and episodes found only in reading texts, meaning that the orally dominated branch of the *Heike* tradition was markedly influenced by its written counterpart.[74]

The interaction between the oral and written traditions of the *Heike* is a central issue of its textual history from its beginning, and this oral-written dichotomy is a defining characteristic of the various *Heike* manuscripts that have survived. Indeed, one can generally place each of the more than 100 different known manuscripts into one of two categories:[75] *yomihon* ("reading book") texts were often written in a chronicle-like style that narrated the events of the later 12th century year-by-year, and frequently included letters, court documents, and other sources.[76] These elements made *yomihon* texts much more suited to be read silently than to be performed with musical accompaniment, a fact further attested by their having been written in *kanbun,* a form of Classical Chinese that used Chinese characters to approximate Japanese words and

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[74] Useful overviews of many variant *Heike* texts and their scholarship are provided by Butler (1966b) 5-51; Saeki (1996) 13-36; Bialock (1999) 73-84, (2007) xiii-iv; Oyler (2006) 5-26; Tokita (2015) 58-60.
[75] Yamada (1911) was responsible for the studies that eventually brought about these categories, which other scholars have attempted to expand or revise ever since (see esp. Tomikura [1964]). More recent work has, like some in Homeric studies (see esp. the works of Nagy, González), moved away from the distinction between oral and written transmission to examining the *Heike* and its variants within the broader context of medieval Japanese narrative, which has found interesting links between different *Heike* variants and other tales. Bialock (1999) surveys and collects the literature. Oyler (2006) and Bialock (2007) are both fine English-language examples of these newer studies.
[76] For concise and informative summaries of *yomihon* and *kataribon* texts and their characteristics in English, see Bialock (1999) 73-84; Oyler (2006) 5-26; Tokita (2015) 58-62.

served as the literary language of well-educated aristocrats, courtiers, and priests

throughout Japan's medieval period. Because only a highly educated minority could read

or write *kanbun*, scholars are more confident that *kanbun* texts were produced by

courtiers or priests, and that *yomihon* versions of the *Heike* generally would not have seen

wide circulation outside of elite or religious circles.[77] *Kataribon* ("narration book") texts,

on the other hand, were likely copies of oral versions of the tale written down for

memorization and performance by recitation set to music. These were typically written

in Japanese kana, simplified Chinese characters that represent the syllables of the

Japanese language, allowing them to be read by a wider audience and likely rendering

them much more suitable for use in memorization.

The two text groups tend to differ in their overall focus and tone concerning the

struggle between the Taira and Minamoto. *Yomihon* texts typically place greater

emphasis on the Minamoto clan's victory and effective takeover of the government, while

the *kataribon* tradition focuses more on literary and religious themes like the tragic fall of

the Taira and Buddhist concepts of impermanence.[78] There are also differences in how

yomihon and *kataribon* manuscripts are subdivided. Similar to the manner in which later

manuscripts of the *Iliad* were divided into "books" that often corresponded to the

individual scrolls upon which they were written (some rolls would contain groupings of

several complete books, but books were never broken up across different rolls),[79] the

largest unit of division for *Heike* manuscripts were *maki* ("scrolls," "rolls," or

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[77] Oyler (2006) 9-14.
[78] Bialock (1999) 77-81; Tokita (2015) 58.
[79] West (1967) 20-3.

"volumes"),[80] which were in turn divided into smaller episodes called *dan* or *ku*.[81] The

different manuscripts of the *Heike* tradition show a wide variation in the number of books

and episodes they contain; as mentioned above, the Kakuichi-bon is divided into twelve

standard books, along with the shorter Initiate's Book to which was appended the 1371

colophon. While there does not appear to have been as much of a fixation in the *Heike*

tradition with a "standard" number of books like the 24 of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,[82]

generally *yomihon* texts tend to be longer and have more books, while *kataribon*

manuscripts are shorter with fewer divisions.[83]

 Another method used by scholars to determine the lineage of *Heike* manuscripts is

identifying which texts include the Initiate's Book. Generally believed to have been an

original creation of 14th-century *biwa hōshi*, the Initiate's Book is described in the

colophon to the Kakuichi-bon as a secret scroll whose contents are to be taught only to

members of the Ichikata school. Despite this veneer of secrecy, however, the Initiate's

Book is a regular feature of most *Heike* manuscripts, with the notable exception of two

major early texts: the early 14th-century Yashiro-bon and Engyō-bon.[84] Because of the

book's absence in these manuscripts, one a *kataribon* and the other a *yomihon* text,

scholars are fairly confident that the Initiate's Book was a popular later addition to the

Heike's standard plot, as attested by its inclusion in nearly all texts postdating the Yashiro

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[80] For the sake of comparative consistency with the Homeric tradition, I will translate *maki* as "book" (even
though the original manuscripts of both traditions were actually written on scrolls).
[81] Oyler (2006) 5-6.
[82] According to West (1967): "no Greek writer before the fourth century B.C. divided his work into books"
(18). Haslam (1997) notes that no book in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* is long enough to take up an entire papyrus
roll or codex, and he interprets the choice of 24 books—one for each letter of the Greek alphabet—was to
show the Homeric poems' comprehensiveness (58-9). For the placement of the *Iliad*'s book divisions and
various possible reasons for their presence in the work, see Heiden (1998) 68-81.
[83] The Yashiro and Kakuichi texts, both *kataribon*, have 12 books each, whereas *yomihon* texts like the
Nagato-bon and Genpei jōsuiki have 20 and 48 books, respectively.
[84] Bialock (1999) 77-9.

and Engyō. As such, a text's omission or inclusion of the Initiate's Book is a useful indication of its origin in either the mid-14th century or sometime later.[85]

The oldest known *Heike* variant is the Engyō-bon, a *yomihon* text that is dated by its colophon to 1309.[86] Written in *kanbun*, the text comprises six large books divided into chapters, and its content varies significantly from that of the Kakuichi-bon,[87] particularly because of its many tangents about minor warriors who are never mentioned in the Kakuichi text, the absence of the Initiate's Book, and overtones of Tendai Buddhism, from which the Pure Land Buddhist ideals that feature in the Kakuichi-bon are notably absent.[88]   The Engyō has received the most attention from scholars in recent decades, not only because of these variations, but also thanks to its much less polished prose that contains frequent inconsistencies and moments of incoherence.[89] As such, it is viewed (rather teleologically) by many scholars like something of a rough draft of the later, more refined *Heike* tradition, and shows how the tale's texts changed over time from chronicle-like records of court history and warriors' deeds to tales of religiously tinged tragedy, political intrigue, and heroic fighting.[90]

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[85] Yamada (1911).

[86] For an overview of the Engyō-bon's features and controversies, see Kanai (1987) 98-109.

[87] Mizuhara (1979); Bialock (1997), (2007); Oyler (2006) 14.

[88] Bialock (1999) 73, (2001) 167. Amida, the Japanese form of Amitābha, is the primary Buddha of the Pure Land, a Buddhist sect that had spread widely through Japan by the time of the Genpei War and that had tremendous influence and popularity in subsequent centuries. It was believed that Amida presided over an idyllic realm called the Pure Land, where his devotees could find relief from karmic transmigration and receive Amida's guidance in achieving enlightenment. To obtain entrance into the Pure Land, followers of Amida would repeatedly chant his name in a brief mantra, called *nembutsu*, with the belief that even a few repetitions could grant them access. Tendai is a far more wide-reaching branch of Buddhism in that it holds all teachings of the Buddha are compatible with one another, meaning that it accommodated the beliefs of Pure Land Buddhism without hostility.

[89] Kobayashi (1991) 64-78; Ubukata (1996) 132-49; Matsuo (1998) 74-93; Murakami (2010) 70.

[90] Another *yomihon* text, the Genpei tōjōroku, shows notable similarities with the Engyō-bon, from which it is thought to have been derived. Dated by its colophon to 1337, the Genpei tōjōroku also introduces significant amounts of material not found in the Kakuichi-bon, most of which focuses on eastern (i.e., Minamoto) warriors (Yamashita [1972] 79-103; Bialock [2001] 167; Oyler [2015] 16), and does not appear to have had as much influence on the Kakuichi text as some of its predecessors and contemporaries.

The Yashiro-bon is thought to be the next oldest *Heike* variant and the senior-most *kataribon* text, and was probably first written down in the early 14th century.[91] Unlike some other manuscripts, the text itself offers no indication of its date, but our relatively firm confidence in the Yashiro's seniority nevertheless rests upon several factors. First, the text is a mélange of different scripts, featuring both kanji (Chinese characters) and katakana,[92] but with many long strings of words written in kanji arranged in literary Sinitic—not native—word order, making for a hybrid of kana and *kanbun* that served as the standard form of writing in Japan at the time.[93] The Yashiro is also divided into twelve books with no discernible divisions between the episodes, but each book features a table of contents that lists each episode, which some have seen as an early effort at creating a text with episodic divisions for memorization and recitation.[94] Next, although the Yashiro-bon does have some formulaic phrases that appear unchanged in later iterations of the *kataribon* line, several of them are considerably wordier than their descendants, and appear to have been elaborated upon in a style more textual than oral.[95] Finally, as mentioned above, the Yashiro does not include the Initiate's Book, thus dating it almost automatically to the early 14th century. All these elements combine to form an image of the Yashiro-bon as a comparatively primitive text: whereas later *kataribon* texts are written in more uniform scripts and feature clear-cut episodic divisions with titles, the Yashiro seems to show only early suggestions of these improvements, which seem tailored for easing the difficulty of memorizing and performing the *Heike*. These factors,

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[91] For more information on the Yashiro-bon with bibliography, see Butler (1966a), (1966b), (1969); Ruch (1990) 538-9; Bialock (1999) 77-9; Oyler (2006) 16.

[92] One of two types of kana.

[93] Butler (1966b) 10.

[94] Butler (1966b) 10, (1969) 97; Bialock (1999) 77-9.

[95] Butler (1966a) 50; Tokita (2015) 58.

combined with the oddities of the Yashiro's formulaic phrases, make it likely that the text was created through a synthesis of smaller oral tales—which appear in the Yashiro-bon as episodes—and the annalistic style of the *yomihon* tradition in order to create something more proximate to a proper *tale* of the Heike, rather than a handful of oral episodes or a written chronicle of the Genpei War.

Another *kanbun-yomihon* text of relatively early date, the Shibu kassenjō daisanban tōjō ("Campaign Number Three of the Four-Part Battle Record") was thought at one point to have been the earliest *Heike* text, and, until the 1970s, the most likely candidate to be the version first written down by Yukinaga in the early 13th century.[96] More recent studies have instead found that the Shibu, whose oldest manuscript was copied in the 1440s, was probably compiled around 1323-4—the text includes its own version of the Initiate's Book—and that it might have been influenced by the Engyō-bon.[97] Although these are much later than previously proposed dates, the Shibu's emergence in the mid-14th century still places it in the midst of the veritable explosion of *Heike* variants written down around that time. Moreover, the Shibu is unique among other *Heike* manuscripts because of its grouping of the *Heike* with three other war tales: the *Hōgen monogatari*, *Heiji monogatari*, and *Jōkyūki*.[98] While the origin of the first Shibu text remains a mystery, that these tales were all grouped together in the same large collection probably shows that formerly oral war tales were being written down in relatively significant numbers in the 14th century, which speaks to their growing

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[96] Among the first *Heike* variants to receive significant scholarly attention, much has been written on the Shibu-bon and its history: see Butler (1966a), (1966b), (1969); Saeki (1987) 30-42, (1990) 69-82; Shida (1990) 87-98; Bialock (1999) 76-7.

[97] Bialock (1999) 76-80.

[98] Tokita (2015) 59.

popularity and to a demand for written copies either for sighted musicians or interested

laypeople. Finally, like the Engyō and other *yomihon* texts, the Shibu-bon is also far

wordier and less poetic than *kataribon Heike* variants, meaning that its twelve large

books show little of the influence by literary and oral versions of the tale seen in some of

the later reading texts produced in the wake of the Kakuichi-bon's surge in popularity.[99]

　　　The next *Heike* variant in line chronologically was the Kamakura-bon, a

kataribon text probably created by *biwa*-playing priests from the Shoshazan monastic

center during the early years of the 14th century.[100] Significantly, Shoshazan was the site

of a sizeable gathering of the battle singers mentioned above after the conclusion of the

Genpei War, and sources from the period also speak of several styles of liturgical music

and chanting developed by Shoshazan monks.[101] The temple complex thus seems to have

been a vibrant nexus of secular and religious music, and the Kamakura-bon shows

notable signs of these different influences, particularly through its emphasis on battle

scenes—some of the most formulaic in the *Heike*—and incorporation of principles from

the Pure Land Buddhist sect.[102] It is because of these aspects of the Kamakura-bon that

Kakuichi is believed to have been trained as a priest and singer at Shoshazan, since the

Kakuichi-bon appears to incorporate battle scenes, formulas, and Pure Land ideals from

the Kamakura-bon with elements from other texts that placed less emphasis on battle

narratives.

　　　One such influential text is the Chikuhakuen-bon, which is dated to sometime

before 1340 and was likely a revision of the Yashiro-bon carried out by Joichi, Kakuichi's

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[99] Butler (1966b) 11.
[100] Butler (1966a) 50-3, (1966b) 37-8; Ruch (1977) 279-309, (1990) 536-7.
[101] Ruch (1977) 295-305, (1990) 536-8.
[102] Butler (1966a) 50-3, (1966b) 37-8; Ruch (1990) 531-41.

biwa hōshi master, and several other singers in Kyoto.[103] This variant is generally seen

as an effort at pruning away some of the *yomihon* influences found in the Yashiro-bon: it

is written in kanji and kana (what would become the standard format for Japanese texts in

later centuries), its formulas are tighter and less wordy, it is neatly divided into twelve

books with the addition of the Initiate's Book, and each book's episodes are individually

named. All of these elements make for a much more organized, reader-friendly

manuscript that is considerably better-suited for use as a recitation text. The Kamakura

and Chikuhakuen texts might thus be seen as direct predecessors of the Kakuichi-bon,

which seems to incorporate elements of both variants.[104]

In the years following its creation, the Kakuichi-bon's dominance seems to have

rapidly diminished the popularity of other variants: the Kamakura text was rediscovered

only in the last century, and the Yashiro-bon seems to have disappeared only somewhat

more gradually.[105] Despite the popularity of the Kakuichi-bon, however, the *Heike*

tradition did not simply remain frozen in time from the late 14th century onward, as other

textual variants appear to have been produced at around the same time or even after

Kakuichi's text had attained fixity. More surprising still, two of these variants, the

Nagato-bon and Genpei jōsuiki, were *yomihon* texts that have many surviving copies

from the Edo period (1603-1868), which likely indicates a preference for recitation texts

in this later period when the popularity of *Heike* performance had declined.[106]

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[103] Atsumi (1962) 71-6; Butler (1966b) 37-8; Ruch (1990) 537-9.
[104] Takagi (1959-60) 33.34-5; Atsumi (1962) 71-6.
[105] Ruch (1990) 538-40.
[106] There are as many as 63 known copies of the Nagato-bon that survive from the Edo period, and the Genpei jōsuiki has survived not only in a few written manuscripts, but also in a large number of woodblock prints—an indication of its popularity and of the changes wrought by the print culture of Edo Japan (Bialock [1999] 80-1).

Both the Nagato-bon and Genpei jōsuiki are thought to have originated in the early Muromachi period (1336-1573),[107] and each variant shows signs of having been created after *biwa hōshi* performance of the *Heike* had become a popular fixture of Muromachi culture. The Nagato text, for example, contains twenty books along with a variant of the Initiate's Book, but also includes episode divisions and names—both mid-14th century innovations of the *kataribon* line that, combined with the presence of the Initiate's Book, suggest a later date for the Nagato.[108] In a similar vein, the Genpei jōsuiki comprises a massive 48 books, the last being a version of the Initiate's Book, and can be thought of as the culmination of the *yomihon* branch of *Heike* texts. Written in the same historiographical style characteristic of many *yomihon* texts, the Genpei jōsuiki was seen in the Edo period as an unofficial history of the late Heian (794-1185 CE) and early Kamakura (1185-1333) periods, and the text also shows tantalizing knowledge of other, earlier *yomihon Heike* variants, for it is replete with references to some of these texts and appears to make a point of clarifying or elaborating upon obscurities found in them.[109]

Although the influence of the Kakuichi text is attested only indirectly in the Nagato-bon and Genpei jōsuiki, the *kataribon* descendants of the Kakuichi-bon are more easily matched with their parent. The rise of print culture in the 17th century created an unprecedented demand for popular literature,[110] and several variants of the *Heike* were among the many works produced in large numbers throughout the Edo period. The first

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[107] Bialock (1999) 73; Oyler (2006) 16.
[108] Bialock (1999) 73, 80-1; Oyler (2006) 16.
[109] Katō (1974) 16; Bialock (1999) 80-1, (2001) 156-7; Hyōdō (2009) 160.
[110] Following the long tumult of the 15th and 16th centuries in Japan, the 17th century saw a significant increase in the urban population of the new capital city of Edo (modern-day Tokyo), which is estimated to have been home to as many as 1,000,000 people by the early 18th century. Consumption of popular literature seems to have surged along with this burgeoning population, and there remains an abundance of texts, including several variants of the *Heike*, that were printed in large numbers for a widely literate public. For history and scholarship of Edo print culture, see Kamei-Dyche (2011) 270-304.

wave of Kakuichi-inspired *Heike* texts is grouped together under the name *rufubon*

("popular editions"), and these were effectively simplified copies of the Kakuichi *Heike*

with a few minor variations. Some other descendants of the Kakuichi-bon not included

in the *rufubon* grouping were the Heike ginpu of 1737 and Heike mabushi of 1776, which

introduced musical notations to the Kakuichi text and rearranged its episodes from a

chronological order into the sequence in which apprentices would learn and memorize

them.[111] Since the addition of musical notation created a fixed musical form in addition

to an already fixed text, these variants are widely viewed as marking the effective

endpoint of oral performance's influence on the development of the *Heike* tradition.

What we see across this lineage, then, are several diverse strands being gradually

woven together to form the version of the *Heike* made familiar by the Kakuichi-bon. The

episodic, oral nature of the tale, which lends itself well to the stylistic constraints of

annalistic history, is preserved throughout the *Heike*'s evolution, and its major parts

formed a narrative that remains consistent from the Engyō-bon to its *rufubon*

descendants. Alongside this historiographical spine, however, run three other primary

strands, the combination of which distinguishes the Kakuichi text from its predecessors.

A learned, court-influenced strand, for example, seems most dominant in the *Heike*'s

earlier variants. Not only are early texts like the Engyō-bon written in *kanbun*, the

literary language of the imperial court and priestly elite, but they also show an overriding

concern for the practical political ramifications of the Genpei War—only with later

kataribon texts did the focus of the narrative shift from the Minamoto clan's victory and

establishment of a new regime to the tragic rise and fall of the Taira. This predilection

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[111] Hyōdō (1994) 23-47; Komoda (2003); Tokita (2015) 59.

for political intrigue might not just be symptomatic of court historiography, but could also be a reflection of the elite's literary tastes, mirrored also in the earlier *Tale of Genji*, which is primarily a tale of romance and political maneuvering. Whatever its bearing on court literature, this court strand likely made its way from the Engyō-bon to the Yashiro-bon, whose revisions would form the basis of the Kakuichi text.

Often operating in close concert with the court strand, a Buddhist strand is also clearly identifiable in most versions of the *Heike*, which is unsurprising given the frequency with which court aristocrats would retire to Buddhist monasteries and the close association between Buddhist temples and *biwa hōshi*. Although the Engyō-bon, currently the first known *Heike* variant, features several religiously themed digressions and overtones of Tendai Buddhism, the Kakuichi-bon is defined by its frequent inclusion of ideas drawn from Pure Land Buddhism. As such, early texts like the Engyō and Yashiro appear to have established many of the *Heike*'s dominant Buddhist themes, while later texts like the Kamakura and Chikuhakuen introduced a Pure Land influence that became more dominant in the Kakuichi version.

Finally, a battle strand, which included formulaic arming and archery scenes, seems to have wended its way through several sub-branches of the *Heike*'s textual lineage. Beginning in the extended battle accounts of the Engyō and other *yomihon* texts like the Shibu kassenjō and Genpei tōjōroku, the battle strand seems to have originated in a number of smaller, regional tales that likely started out as oral episodes created by singers. The more formulaic elements of the Kakuichi *Heike*'s many battle scenes probably did not come from these *yomihon* ancestors, however, but from the oral tales of those *biwa hōshi* from the south and east who had dedicated themselves to singing tales

of martial glory; and their gathering at Shoshazan in the time leading up to the end of the

Kamakura period (1185-1333) was perhaps responsible for the influence of the

Kamakura-bon's formulaic battle scenes on those of the Kakuichi-bon.

The *Heike* tradition thus displays a fascinating interplay between oral and written

elements for the first several centuries of its history. Although the medieval Japanese

elite seem to have emphasized writing and written texts much more than the ancient

Greeks, the written-oral interaction still can serve as a valuable comparative tool that

might grant us more insight into the textual history of the *Iliad*. As such, the following

section will examine how the *Heike* tradition can expand our understanding of how the

Iliad was formed, how it might have related to other ancient poems about the Trojan War,

the role played by the Homeridae and Panathenaic festival in the *Iliad*'s development, and

how performance (and performers) of the *Iliad* probably changed in concert with the

poem's gradual move toward relative textual fixity.

I.3: Comparative Applications of the *Heike* Tradition

In keeping with the general consensus among Homeric scholars and the

suggestive parallel provided by the *Heike* tradition, it is eminently reasonable to assume

that the *Iliad*'s roots lay in an oral tradition, which probably dates at least to the Iron Age

(~1050-800 BCE). Also like the *Heike*, however, the poem was likely not originally

composed or performed as a whole, nor did its earlier Iron Age form(s) resemble the

finished product with which we are familiar. Instead, the original *Iliad* took shape

gradually in the form of several interrelated episodes, perhaps quite similar to those still

being performed in the much diminished *Heike* tradition of the modern era. Among the

several reasons for which this conclusion seems necessary, foremost are the practical

considerations of poetic performance in an earlier era devoid of written texts, where the only medium for poetry was in the oral-formulaic performances of *aoidoi*. Aside from the established comparanda of the Serbo-Croatian poetic tradition, modern and medieval examples of *Heike* performance are also of some utility in reconstructing the performance conditions of ancient Greece. In both medieval and modern *Heike* performances, for example, *biwa hōshi* rarely sang or sing more than a few episodes, with each episode taking about thirty to forty minutes to perform in full.[112] The Homeric poems also appear to consist of linked episodes, and we might thus deduce that this episode-like form of composition, similar to that seen in the *Heike* tradition, indicates that the performances of Greek bards also would have consisted of only a few hours of poetry.

Based on the similar episode-based genesis of the *Heike*, the origin of the *Iliad* may resemble something like the models put forward by some Analyst scholars of the 19th century,[113] namely that the tale is an accretion of episodes drawn from the Greek oral tradition and assembled around a core narrative, which was itself formed from several interrelated episodes. This *Iliad*, like the *Heike*, probably did not take shape as a complete tale until its transfer to writing in the 8th century BCE, and in this form was also likely the work of a single poet who imposed structure and some stylistic unity on its narrative. But, contrary to the position that the *Iliad* was composed in a near-complete, fixed form at this early date, I see no reason to suppose that a near-final version of the tale was produced at this point in its history. As the detailed history of *Heike* variants shows—especially among the *kataribon* texts—it is entirely possible for a written epic to

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[112] Butler (1966a) 51; Ruch (1990) 532; de Ferranti (1995) 155.

[113] Summarized (with bibliography) in West (2011c) 55-8. More recent scholarship on the episodic nature of the poem can be found in Sealey (1957) 349; Nagy (1996a) 78-80; West (2001) 3-32, (2011) 52-75.

maintain its stylistic integrity through several iterations over more than a century, which means a core narrative of the *Iliad* could have been written down for the first time in the mid-8th century and added to over time by those trained in oral-formulaic composition, just as the Kakuichi-bon was produced by blind and sighted singers in a similar accretive process.

Examples of the episodic substructure of the *Iliad* are easily discerned at many points in the poem simply by looking for places where scenes end and new ones begin. Book 2 in particular is an excellent example of two episodes tied together in the same book: the first half depicts Agamemnon's near-disastrous assembly of the Achaean host (*Il.* 2.1-483), and the second the Catalogue of Ships and the naming of the Trojan host (484-877). Book 10, also known as the Doloneia, likewise stands out as an example of episodic construction, since its depiction of a nighttime raid on a Thracian encampment by Diomedes and Odysseus is referred to nowhere else in the poem and seems entirely self-contained. Moreover, Book 10's 576 lines are not much longer than either of the two halves of Book 2, and matches the length of a longer *Heike* episode relatively well.[114] Beyond these examples, the majority of the remaining books of the *Iliad* similarly feature one or two episodes each, such as the embassy to Achilles in Book 9 (713 lines), the description of Achilles's armor and shield being forged by Hephaestus in Book 18 (349

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[114] Because of the peculiarities of the Japanese tradition, the *Heike* does not feature uniform line lengths like Homeric poetry and some portions of its episodes are performed at a much slower or faster pace than others, sometimes interspersed with purely instrumental passages—one *Heike* performer in the mid-20th century, for example, would routinely begin his performances of the tale with a fifteen-minute musical prelude, and would take another fifteen minutes to perform just the first 36 lines (Ruch [1975] 233-4). These factors make comparing the length of *Heike* episodes with those of the *Iliad* quite difficult, as most current conceptions of how the *Iliad* was performed do not factor in a musical component and instead tend to imagine that singers would simply deliver the poem in a sustained, rhythmic chant. Nevertheless, it is possible to make a rough calculation based on the recorded performances of modern *Heike* singers and the time it takes to chant aloud the episodes of the *Iliad* highlighted above.

lines), and the funeral (257 lines) and games (640 lines) for Patroclus in Book 23. All these examples share characteristics similar to the episodes found in the *Heike*, integrate fairly seamlessly with the episodes that surround them, and could easily have been added to the *Iliad* at some point without disrupting its overall narrative.

There are some key differences between the episodes of the *Iliad* and those in the *Heike* that might illuminate further our understanding of the *Iliad*'s development in this way. By the rough measure above, there are approximately 50 episodes in the *Iliad*— fewer than the 182 found in the *Heike*, but this is unsurprising given the *Heike*'s greater length and the much more variable size of its episodes, the shortest of which are no longer than a page. Moreover, the *Heike* displays much more openly that its episodes were stitched together than the *Iliad* does, since each of the episodes in the Kakuichi-bon is individually named and back-to-back episodes often contribute to completely different strands of its much more complex narrative.[115] The *Iliad*'s episodes, on the other hand, do not show their seams nearly as overtly as those in the *Heike*, and this is at least in part because of the Kakuichi-bon's clearly defined role as a performance text for *biwa hōshi*. Also unlike the Kakuichi *Heike*, book divisions were probably not even added to the *Iliad* until after the 5th century,[116] only some of its episodes have individual names (none of which are actually given in the poem itself),[117] and the comparatively simpler plot is

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[115] Whereas the *Iliad*'s story centers around Achilles's wrath and its dire effects on the Greeks and Trojans over the course of several days, the *Heike* follows closely the careers of several members of the Taira and Minamoto clans in addition to a host of other relatively minor characters, and covers nearly three decades.
[116] Scholars have debated whether the introduction of book divisions in the Homeric poems was a pre-Alexandrian innovation. Pre-Alexandrian: West (1967) 18-25; Janko (1992) 39-40; Stanley (1993) 397-8 n. 7; Nagy (1996b) 181; West (2001) 18. Alexandrian: Taplin (1992) 285-6; Richardson (1993) 20-1.
[117] A vase painting from as early as 580 BCE attaches the title *Patroklou athla* ("the games of Patroclus") to its depiction of the episode from Book 23 (Shapiro [1993] 103). A papyrus fragment of Book 5 from the 1st century BCE notes in its end-title that the book contains the Aristeia of Diomedes (Haslam [1997] 58 n. 5), and the 2nd-century CE writer Aelian mentions the episode *athla epi Patroklō* ("the games for Patroclus"), along with the Doloneia, Aristeia of Agamemnon, Catalogue of Ships, Patrocleia, Breaking of

advanced rather steadily with each episode and book as we see the consequences of

Achilles's wrath spill over to both the Greek and Trojan armies. These features,

particularly when compared with their more sophisticated and specialized *Heike*

counterparts, suggest, first, that the core narrative of the *Iliad* and its associated episodes

were not as carefully adapted as those in the *Heike*, and so might be closer to their

original forms with only slight modifications or additions made in order to connect them.

Second, this also might mean that the *Iliad*'s written form had to change only slightly to

accommodate additional episodes, which would make adding and even subtracting

episodes much easier, while also much more difficult for us to detect, given the lack of

clearly defined names and numbers for episodes like those found in the *Heike*.

This model of an accretive, episodic process that might have formed the *Iliad* also

has bearing on oral-formulaic theory, for several scholars have argued that the writing

down of the Homeric poems soon after composition led to their textual fixity and the

death of oral-formulaic composition among the bards who performed these epics.[118]

While it is certainly true that oral-formulaic composition eventually gave way to

memorization and recitation of fixed written texts, Oralists have perhaps overestimated

the speed at which this process occurred. As the *Heike* tradition suggests, the appearance

of written texts need not immediately destroy an oral tradition; indeed, written texts can

influence oral tales and in turn be altered by oral tradition for several centuries after their

creation. Even if, for example, the earliest written text of the *Heike* was not compiled

until the late 13th century CE, oral composition played a central role in the many

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Oaths, and a host of other episodes from the *Odyssey* (Ael., *VH* 13.14; see also Ready and Tsagalis [2018]
50).
[118] See n. 40.

revisions of the *Heike* tradition's *kataribon* texts for the whole of the next century, and

the death-by-fixity envisioned by Oralists does not seem to have been fully realized until

the Edo period, some 300 years later. That this long survival of oral *and* written

traditions could occur in a society with a considerably greater emphasis on literacy and

writing than ancient Greece should suggest to us all the more that the appearance of the

Homeric poems in writing in the mid-8th century BCE does not preclude the continuation

of oral-formulaic composition for several centuries thereafter. Furthermore, the episodes

of the *Iliad*, with a few exceptions, feature typically neat divisions into different scenes

that align well with the idea that oral-formulaic poets made use of "type scenes" or

"themes" to guide their crafting of episodes in performance.[119] Given our knowledge of

the *Heike*'s manuscript tradition, these points may suggest that we can have greater

confidence in the oral basis of even the written *Iliad*.

A counterexample to the generally neat, scene-based division of episodes in the

Iliad illustrates the episodic construction of the poem quite well, since Book 1 has a much

more complex construction than the *Iliad*'s other books, which might indicate that it

either was developed later or at least edited more attentively at some point after the tale's

transfer to writing. For not only does Book 1 effectively contain four distinct episodes—

the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, the embassy to return Chryseis's daughter

and offer sacrifice to Apollo, Achilles's complaint to Thetis and Zeus, and Zeus's council

with the gods—but each of these episodes is broken up at several points in a manner

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[119] The idea of repetitive "type scenes"—that is, basic categories of scenes like warriors being killed in battle, guests being given hospitality, feasting, burial, or speaking in assembly—being used in the Homeric poems was first put forward by Arend (1933), while Parry used the term "theme" to signify the same principle, which both he and Lord considered central to oral-formulaic technique (Parry [1930] 81; Lord [1960] 173).

uncharacteristic of the typically clean divisions between episodes in the *Iliad*'s other

books. Book 1 begins with the quarrel (1.1-305), which is interrupted briefly by

Odysseus's departure for Chryse (1.306-11), and then reaches its conclusion when

Agamemnon sends men to take Briseis from Achilles's tent (1.318-50). Achilles then

complains to Thetis of his mistreatment by Agamemnon and Thetis promises to take up

his grievance with Zeus (1.351-430), but before venturing with her to Olympus we must

first hear about Odysseus's activities at Chryse (1.430-87), and only after his sacrifice to

Apollo is concluded and his ship returned to the Greek camp does the "Achilles's

complaint" episode resume (1.488-530), followed by the council of the gods in the wake

of Thetis's departure from Olympus (1.531-611). Even if the embassy to Chryse is

considered a part of the quarrel episode, its interruption of Thetis's journey to Olympus is

at odds with the usual tendency of episodes in the *Iliad* to progress uninterrupted and

finish before another one starts, and this close interweaving of episodes is a literary

quality otherwise found only occasionally in the poem. It is therefore possible that Book

1 is an example of a more skillfully engineered book that might have reached its current

form after the *Iliad*'s transfer to writing, whereas the episodes in other books were

attached to one another with comparatively less finesse. For if the majority of the *Iliad*'s

episodes had been composed in writing or, like the *Heike*, created first in oral form and

then inserted and edited heavily by literate bards, we should expect a greater amount of

narrative complexity like that seen in Book 1. That this is not the case suggests that for

the most part the *Iliad* and the episodes it contains are probably closer to their original,

oral state, than those found in the *Heike*, and comparatively less literary editing seems to

have occurred.

These effects of the interaction between continuing oral and written traditions are also illustrated well by episodes that seem oddly situated within the *Iliad*'s main narrative or that appear to have been elaborated on over time after first being written down, such as the Catalogue of Ships in Book 2 and the Doloneia of Book 10. Views on the Catalogue of Ships and its place on the *Iliad*'s compositional timeline vary considerably,[120] with some scholars seeing it as entirely original to the first written version,[121] as a later interpolation,[122] or as something partly original but later expanded upon in varying degrees.[123] The last is the most popular position, and its proponents suggest, for example, that lists of ancient city-states taken from temple sites, as well as other geographic lists and mnemonic techniques found in different epics like the *Thebaid*, might have been used to expand the Catalogue's impressive grouping of place names.[124] This piecemeal construction of the Catalogue suggests that while parts of it might have been original to the first written version of the *Iliad*, it could have been added to over time in written form using both written and orally derived sources. A similar interaction between written and oral sources can be seen in the Kakuichi *Heike*, which, like several of its *kataribon* predecessors, incorporated into its own narrative some of the letters, poems, and other historical documents found in *yomihon* variants of the tale.[125] Although the historical record of ancient Greece has not been nearly so accommodating as that of medieval Japan, it is at least possible, if not likely, that the Catalogue is an amalgam of lists from

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[120] See Hope Simpson and Lazenby (1970); Anderson (1995) 181-91; Visser (1997); Latacz (2001) 219-49; Eder (2003) 287-308; Dickinson (2007) 233-8.

[121] Janko (2012) 27-30.

[122] West (1973) 179-92.

[123] Kullmann (2012) 210-23; Jasnow, Evans, Clay (2018) 1-44.

[124] For the former, Kullmann (2012) 210-23; the latter, Jasnow, Evans, Clay (2018) 39-40.

[125] For example, *Heike* 5.5 provides a list of historical rebels against the imperial court, while 11.17 contains the historically attested Koshigoe Letter written by Minamoto Yoshitsune to his brother Yoritomo when the two had become dangerously estranged (see Varley [1994] 135).

various written and oral sources, which suggests a cooperative rather than antagonistic

relationship between these two modes of transmission in Homeric textual history.

On the other hand, Book 10 of the *Iliad*, the Doloneia, presents a troubling puzzle.

For, although devoid of significant linguistic divergences from the rest of the poem,[126] it

features several odd elements found nowhere else in the *Iliad*: for one, characters arm and

clothe themselves with pieces unique to Book 10, like Agamemnon's and Diomedes's

lion-skin cloaks (10.23, 77-8), Nestor's double-folded, fleece-lined purple cloak (10.133-

4), the leather skullcap and boar-tusk helmet worn by Diomedes and Odysseus (10.254-

71), Dolon's ferret-skin cap and wolf-skin cloak (10.333-5), and an unusual number of

bows. Although the covert nighttime raid depicted in Book 10 is an adventure quite

different from the rest of the *Iliad* and one for which we can reasonably expect heroes to

be armed differently, Agamemnon is depicted elsewhere in the poem roving about the

Greek camp in a purple cloak that lacks the special features mentioned for Nestor's and is

notably not made of lion skin (2.43, 8.220-1). Other irregularities in Book 10 include

frequent violations Zielinski's Law,[127] which maintains that the poet does not represent

events as happening simultaneously, and which is broken nowhere else in the *Iliad* but

Book 10. Finally, speeches are constructed in ways different from the rest of the *Iliad* but

similar to the *Odyssey*, and certain words and constructions thought to be characteristic of

Homeric style are used in forms and tenses different from those found in the poem's other

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[126] Janko (1982) 201-20; Danek (1988) 20-47.
[127] These are listed and analyzed by Danek (2012) 111-16.

books.[128] For these and other reasons, Book 10 holds the distinction of being the only book in the poem to have been labelled an interpolation in antiquity.[129]

In light of the Japanese tradition, these issues may recommend the model proposed above for the textual history of the *Iliad*, in which poets trained in oral-formulaic composition maintained and added to a written text of the poem for centuries before that text achieved true fixity. Much as Danek has argued,[130] it is entirely possible that an ancient bard was well versed in the language and poetic techniques of the *Iliad* and employed those techniques in creating the Doloneia—a story that was probably already part of the extended mythos called the Epic or Trojan Cycle or perhaps a part of the *Iliad* already, albeit in a more abbreviated form.[131] In this way, the Doloneia can in some ways be seen as the Initiate's Book of the *Iliad*, in that it is noticeably uninvolved in the rest of the tale's plot and contains certain elements that suggest it was a later addition.

These are but two examples—the other episodic chunks of the *Iliad* notwithstanding—of how other poets practiced in oral-formulaic composition might have influenced an unfixed, written *Iliad*. But who were these other poets, and how might they have been able to alter the *Iliad* in this way over time? As seen in the earlier overview of the *Heike*'s textual history, the additions and alterations in that tradition seem to have been normal activities for the members of singers' guilds. Unfortunately, there is little attestation of Greek poetic guilds save for the Homeridae[132] and the Creophylae of

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[128] Danek (2012) 108-10. For an in-depth, line-by-line examination of the Doloneia and its differences from the rest of the *Iliad*, see Danek (1988).

[129] Schol. T., *Il.* 10.1.

[130] Danek (2012) 108.

[131] The Doloneia is attested in artwork from the Peloponnese by ~600 BCE (Friis Johansen [1967] 75). The Trojan Cycle, which consisted of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and six other poems (*Cypria*, *Aethiopis*, *Parva Ilias*, *Iliou Persis*, *Nostoi*, and *Telegony*) now exists only in depressingly small fragments (see Fantuzzi and Tsagalis [2015]).

[132] See n. 34 for ancient testimonia about the Homeridae.

Samos,[133] the latter of whom we know almost nothing about. What is reported is that

they were named after a certain Creophylus, gained fame for their tales about Heracles

and other heroes, and were also said to have performed works associated with Homer.[134]

Despite this lack of information, the relationship of these guilds with the Homeric

tradition still bears exploring.

As noted above, information about the Homeridae is also incomplete, but more

abundant than what we have for the Creophylae. The earliest ancient source to mention

the Homeridae is Pindar's second *Nemean Ode*, which opens with a remark on how the

Homeridae, "singers of stitched-together songs" (*rhaptōn epeōn aoidoi*),[135] begin their

performances with a hymn to Zeus (Pind., *Nem.* 2.1-3). This particular ode, dated to the

480s BCE, neglects to provide any background about the Homeridae or their practices,

which likely means the guild was sufficiently well known in mainland Greece by the end

of the 6th century that Pindar's audience would need no further information. Other

ancient testimonia about the Homeridae—although late and poor—assign the guild's

origin to Chios,[136] which was also one of the many Ionian city-states that claimed to have

been the site of Homer's first poetic activities. But perhaps the most illuminating passage

on the Homeridae and their relationship with their namesake and his poetry comes from

an ancient commentary (scholion) on the Pindar passage above:

> In antiquity those descended from Homer were called Homeridae, and they sang
> his poetry by right of succession; and afterward also the rhapsodes who no longer
> traced their descent to Homer. Those who were around Cynaethus became
> famous, and they are said to have composed many verses and interpolated them

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[133] See n. 33.

[134] A fragment attributed to Aristotle mentions that Lycurgus, the great lawgiver of Sparta, was the first to take the Homeric poems to the Peloponnese after receiving them from the Creophylae in Samos (Rose [1967] 611.10); Plutarch echoes this tale in his *Life of Lycurgus* (44.4). See also Graziosi (2002) 201-6.

[135] See n. 164 for the debate over the meaning of this and other words associated with ancient Greek bards.

[136] Strab. 14.1.35; Harpocration s.v. Homeridae.

into the poems of Homer. Cynaethus was by birth a Chian, and, of the poems
ascribed to Homer, he composed the *Hymn to Apollo* and attributed it to [Homer].
Moreover, this Cynaethus was the first to recite the epics of Homer in Syracuse
during the 69th Olympiad, as Hippostratus says. (Schol. Pind. *ad N.* 2.1)[137]

There are several interesting items to unpack from this passage. First, the scholiast's

comment that rhapsodes succeeded the Homeridae as performers of Homeric poetry

harks back to the debate mentioned earlier over the distinction between *aoidoi* ("singers")

and *rhapsōdoi* ("reciters"), and it aligns well with Pindar's description of the guild in

Nemean 2, where he calls them *aoidoi*. Second, Cynaethus's activity as a member of the

guild seems appealingly similar to that of individuals in the Japanese tradition like

Kakuichi who added to or altered earlier versions of tales,[138] and the idea that poets could

have composed hymns and other works that were later attributed to Homer does much to

explain the linguistic inconsistencies between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Homeric

Hymns pointed out by Janko,[139] as well as the long list of other works attributed to Homer

in the ancient tradition. Finally, the idea that the Homeridae performed Homer's poetry

"by right of succession" (*ek diadochēs*) suggests some connection with an individual

named Homer (who may or may not have been the legendary composer of the *Iliad* and

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[137] The Pindar scholia are generally (and somewhat hypocritically) maligned for their ability to interpret
Pindar's poems, primarily because of those poems' famous difficulty and ambiguity. That said, the scholia
can still be seen as valuable historical sources in the case of passages like this one, particularly because of
the scholiast's focus on providing supplementary historical information and not on literary interpretation, as
well as our general lack of pre-Hellenistic sources on the Homeridae and the scholiast's citation of the lost
historian Hippostratus. For more on the Pindar scholia, see Deas (1931) 1-78; Wilson (1967) 244-56;
Lefkowitz (1975) 173-85, (1985) 269-82; Wilson (1980) 97-114.
[138] See n. 103.
[139] See n. 16.

Odyssey), but whether that individual was real or, as has been argued,[140] a fabrication by the Homeridae themselves, is outside the bounds of this study.[141]

Based on these hints about the Homeridae and the suggestive parallel of the *biwa hōshi* guilds of Japan, it is not impossible that ancient Greek bards who were members of guilds like the Homeridae and Creophylae might have had a relationship with the epic poems of the Trojan Cycle similar to that of their Japanese counterparts with the *Heike* and other *gunkimono*. It is notable that both guilds were from Ionia, a consistent trend among Greek poets associated with the epic tradition—of the nineteen poets associated with the Trojan Cycle named in ancient sources, only six were not from the eastern side of the Aegean.[142] These correspondences suggest a few things: first, that the Greek cities of Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean produced epic poets in a disproportionately larger number than their mainland counterparts—a distribution consistent with the linguistic heritage of epic detailed by Janko.[143] Second, that this imbalance would have placed the burden of spreading the *Iliad* and other epic poetry that originated in Ionia to the rest of the Greek world rather heavily upon Ionian guilds like the Chian Homeridae and Samian Creophylae. Finally, that, like the *biwa hōshi* guilds of medieval Japan, these relatively small groups of regionally concentrated poets had a disproportionate influence on the

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[140] West (1999) 376.

[141] While there are tantalizing similarities between the origin stories of Homer and Kakuichi—both are said to have been born with different names, gone blind, adopted new names, became traveling singers, and created the great works attributed to them—the lack of reliable evidence, particularly for Homer, make this little more than an entertaining point of comparison.

[142] Agias (Troezen), Carcinus (Naupactus), Cinaethon (Sparta), Eugammon (Cyrene), Eumelus (Corinth), Hegesias (Salamis). Poets traditionally held to have been from Asia Minor include: Antimachus (Teos), Arctinus (Miletus), Creophylus (Samos), Cyprias (Halicarnassus), Diodorus (Erythrae), Homer (Aeolis/Ionia), Lesches (Pyrrha), Panyassis (Halicarnassus), Pisander (Camirus), Pisinous (Lindus), Prodicus (Phocaea), Stasinus (Cyprus), Thestorides (Phocaea).

[143] Janko (1982) 200 contends that Southern Aeolic and Ionic linguistic phases preceded the composition of the *Iliad*.

development of the Greek epic tradition, and that this influence was achieved at least in

part through the many poems in addition to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that made up the Trojan

Cycle for which singers' guilds were likely responsible.

Such influence is seen during the spread of the *Heike* in the 14th century, when

several distinct guilds or schools appear to have formed around specific variants of the

Heike and notable *biwa hōshi* like Kakuichi, and it is estimated that as many as 600 *biwa*

hōshi from these schools were active in Kyoto alone by the 15th century CE,[144] where

they performed the *Heike* and other popular pieces from their repertory like the *Hōgen*

and *Heiji monogatari*. Also, as the colophon of the Kakuichi-bon shows, the lineage of

both a performer and the pieces in their repertory were matters of importance to *biwa*

hōshi—and, presumably, to their audiences.[145] The same might have been true among

the bards of ancient Greece, for although the *Iliad* is seen today as the definitive story of

the Trojan War, there were other popular epics set in the Trojan Cycle, presumably by

poets other than Homer. One of these in particular, the *Aethiopis*, is commonly ascribed

to the 8th-century BCE poet Arctinus of Miletus, and covers the portion of the Trojan

War immediately after that described in the *Iliad*. The *Aethiopis* is most notable,

however, because of the similarities scholars have noted between its narrative, which

centers around Achilles's rage over the death of Nestor's son Antilochus, and that of the

Iliad, which have led some to argue that the *Iliad*'s narrative is adapted from that of the

Aethiopis.[146] While, of course, it is just as possible that the main plotline of the *Aethiopis*

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[144] Naramoto and Hayashiya (1968) 3.666.

[145] Lineage is an important element of nearly any traditional profession in Japan, not just among *biwa hōshi* and other musicians. *Nō* and *kabuki* actors, swordsmiths, potters, and even flower arrangers pride themselves on having lengthy pedigrees that reach far back into the medieval period.

[146] The so-called "Memnon theory" originated with Schadewaldt (1965), who argued that the *Iliad*'s major plotline—Achilles's rage over Hector's killing of Patroclus—is derived from the *Aethiopis*, where Patroclus's role is filled by Nestor's son Antilochus and Hector is replaced by the Ethiopian king Memnon.

was based on that of the *Iliad*, the parallels provided by the *Heike*'s textual history insinuate instead that the two poems might be viewed as similar elaborations upon different parts of the same Trojan story—mutual influence in either direction being a definite possibility. In time, the *Iliad*'s popularity so eclipsed that of the *Aethiopis* that the latter eventually faded into obscurity, just as the popularity of the Kakuichi *Heike* so thoroughly drove even the formerly dominant Yashiro-bon from public consciousness to the extent that it was long thought lost.[147]

As for the extent of the Homeric poems' early influence, we can trace the spread of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* throughout the Greek mainland only somewhat crudely, mostly through vase paintings, inscriptions, and other assorted testimonia that mention Homer or iconic scenes from the poems. Judging by this evidence, knowledge of the whole Trojan Cycle seems to have been widespread in the Peloponnese by 600 BCE.[148] But the dissemination of a complete *Iliad* (as we know it) throughout the Greek world seems to have been more protracted, for Athenian vases depicting scenes from the poem are restricted to its last few books until around 520, when Attic vase painters at last seem to have become acquainted with the entire poem.[149] This curious discrepancy between the Peloponnese and Attica supports the suggestion above, namely that the *Iliad* was probably not performed in its entirety but that singers selected a handful of episodes for their audiences, and that multiple poetic guilds likely performed different versions of the tale of the Trojan War. The evolution of the Kakuichi *Heike*'s different contributory

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This study in turn gave birth to the school of Neo-Analysis. For up-to-date bibliography and reassessment of Neo-Analysis, see Davies (2016).

[147] Both the Yashiro and Kamakura texts were thought lost for several centuries until their 20th-century rediscovery in the archives of Buddhist temples (Ruch [1990] 539).

[148] Friis Johansen (1967) 75; Snodgrass (1998); Carpenter (2015) 178-96.

[149] Friis Johansen (1967) 223-7, 236-40; Shapiro (1989) 43-6; Carpenter (2015) 178-96.

strands is an apt parallel for this process. In the same way as many of the episodes

depicting battles and warriors were probably developed over time in several regions of

Japan by different singers and brought together in the Kamakura-bon at Shōshazan, it is

possible that the episodes that would later make up the complete *Iliad* were added

throughout the 7th and possibly the 6th centuries, or that performance of Trojan War epic

poetry in Attica was dominated by a singers' guild that only covered the struggle between

Hector and Achilles. Whatever the situation might have been, the association of a large,

episodic epic with the Homeridae and 6th-century BCE Attica is an important phase in

the *Iliad*'s textual history, much like, perhaps, 14th-century CE Kyoto for the *Heike* and

biwa hōshi guilds.

As outlined above, few scholars now take seriously the notion that the Athenian

tyrant Pisistratus somehow worked with the Homeridae or was otherwise responsible for

assembling the diffuse episodes that made up the story of the *Iliad* as a coherent work in

the late 6th century BCE. Many do, however, believe there is some credibility to the link

between Pisistratus's son Hipparchus, the *Iliad*, the Homeridae, and the Panathenaic

festival,[150] and the considerations offered in this chapter seem to support the idea that the

confluence of these different elements led to the creation of the canonical *Iliad*. The

proliferation of Attic vases depicting scenes from the whole *Iliad* around 520 also

corresponds quite well with the time of Hipparchus's influence in Athens during the reign

of his brother Hippias (528/7-510), as do several ancient sources that attribute the

implementation of the Panathenaic Rule to the Pisistratids.[151] Although it is possible that

the *Iliad* performed by the Homeridae was not complete until their invitation to Athens

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[150] See nn. 41-9.
[151] Collected in Davison (1955) 1-21.

by Hipparchus, this seems unlikely, given that the very concept of the Panathenaic Rule seems to require a pre-existing large, multi-volume epic poem for contestants in the Homeric poetry contest to use as a reference; the existence of vase scenes from the entirety of the *Iliad* elsewhere in Greece supports this as well. As such, the establishment of the Panathenaic Rule serves as a kind of terminus for the assembly of an effectively complete *Iliad*,[152] much as the colophon from the Kakuichi-bon anchors the relative fixity of that text to 1371 CE.

Based on this association between the Pisistratids, the Panathenaic Rule, and the Homeridae, the role of the Homeridae and the Homeric *Iliad* in this process seems temptingly similar to that of the Ichikata school and the Kakuichi *Heike*. Beyond his own skill as a bard, one of Kakuichi's greatest achievements in his career as a *biwa hōshi* was securing the patronage of the recently ascended Ashikaga shogunate, which established a relationship between Kakuichi's *tōdō-za* guild and the shogunate that, save for a brief hiatus between the fall of the Ashikaga and rise of the Tokugawa, would endure until the second half of the 19th century. Pisistratid patronage of the Homeridae was not nearly so long-lasting, but still seems to have been an important factor in the development of the canonical *Iliad*. As Janko has argued, Attic elements in the language of epic suggest that most later Homeric manuscripts were likely influenced by copies from Athens, copies that could have been made and circulated in numbers greater than ever before through the patronage of the Pisistratids.[153]

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[152] Davison (1955) 14-15; Sealey (1957) 349-50; Foley (1990) 20-1; Haslam (1997) 81-3; West (2001) 18-19; Graziosi (2002) 227; Tsagalis (2018) 46-52.
[153] Janko (1992) 37.

In fairness, the Homeridae might have been perfectly capable of producing copies of their written *Iliad* on their own, but we may wish not to underestimate the role of aristocratic patronage in the transmission of oral epics to writing. As seen in the *Heike* tradition, while *biwa hōshi*, even when blind, kept written copies of their tales from a relatively early date, the real proliferation of written texts did not occur until singers' guilds began performing the *Heike* for aristocrats in Kyoto, whose demand for copies of the tale that they could read would also later lead to the production of the *rufubon* and texts with musical notations (the Heike ginpu and Heike mabushi). Given the popularity of the *Iliad* in the centuries following the traditional date of arrival for the Homeridae in Athens, it does not seem too farfetched to assume that the sponsorship of the Pisistratids and subsequent aristocratic infatuation with the poem resulted in an upsurge of written copies of the *Iliad* in Attica, which would help to ensure the primacy of Homer's tale from the Trojan War forever after.

Unfortunately, the Athenian *Iliad*'s success is not attested beyond the Attic characteristics of its language and its popularity in art and literature in subsequent centuries. The earliest surviving Homeric papyri only date to the 300s BCE, and bear no obvious signs of having been from Athens—curiously, most of the "city texts" come from outside mainland Greece.[154] But these fragments do nevertheless bear witness to the *Iliad*'s history after its incorporation into the Panathenaea, for the relative similarity of the fragments' narrative suggests a degree of fixity that could only have occurred if copies of the Homeric *Iliad* had found their way to other cities in the Greek world where poets using an attenuated form of oral-formulaic composition added the plus verses and other

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[154] These sites include Massalia, Chios, Sinope, Cyprus, and Crete, with the only mainland texts coming from the Argolid.

slight alterations that set them apart from the Homeric Vulgate. This might have been the work of other poetic guilds or of the Homeridae themselves, but what seems most important about the differences between these texts is how minute they are compared to the larger ones found earlier between, say, the *Iliad* and the *Aethiopis*. Such a lessening in variation suggests not only the dominance of the Vulgate *Iliad* by the end of the 4th century BCE, but also the decline of oral-formulaic composition and a greater reliance by performers on memorization and recitation of texts.

Just as the popularity of the Kakuichi-bon seems to have catalyzed the process of shifting the *Heike* tradition away from oral composition and toward libretto-like recitation texts, then, the Panathenaic *Iliad* also appears to mark the point from which oral-formulaic technique in Greece began a more rapid decline. But this was probably also the consequence of several other factors as well. In 18th-century CE Japan, for example, the prevalence of written copies of the *Heike* combined with a decline in the popularity of its performances effectively to wrest control of the text away from the dwindling ranks of the *tōdō-za* guild, whose members turned to other modes of musical performance and even to money-lending to keep the guild afloat.[155] Although we know next to nothing about how many professional singers there were in ancient Greece, it is not unreasonable to assume a similar decline in their numbers as written copies of the *Iliad*, like the *Heike* in the Edo period, became more popular and widespread.

It is at this point of transition from oral-formulaic composition to recitation based on written texts that we can probably begin to speak with greater confidence on the distinction between *aoidoi* and *rhapsōdoi*. As noted above, earlier ancient sources use

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[155] For the activities of the *tōdō-za* in the Edo period, see Groemer (2001) 349-80.

the term *aoidoi* for performers of epic poetry (including the Homeridae), but no mention of *rhapsōdoi* can be found before Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* from the latter half of the 5th century BCE.[156] Although the use of the term *rhapsōdos* overtakes that of *aoidos* in the literature of subsequent centuries, it is actually difficult to find a clear distinction between the two: while there are occasions when *rhapsōdoi* are explicitly linked with recitation of existing works and *aoidoi* with performing original material of their own creation,[157] other instances see the terms being used more or less interchangeably.[158] Efforts to discern the difference between *aoidos* and *rhapsōdos* are complicated further by the fact that *rhapsōdoi* are rarely spoken of in literature in an explanatory capacity—Plato, who seems to teeter between distinguishing *rhapsōdoi* from epic poets and seeing them as one in the same,[159] is our main source—and are barely attested in ancient artwork.[160] The latter point is particularly odd given the frequent depiction on vases of scenes from the Homeric poems and other works of the Trojan Cycle,[161] so that there appears to be a disconnect between the popularity of artwork featuring the performers of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and actual scenes from the poems themselves.

In the Japanese tradition, the basic elements of *Heike* performance seem to have remained relatively constant: performers played the *biwa*, sometimes alone, sometimes with a partner,[162] and alternated between singing, chanting, and reciting spoken portions of a tale. The oral tradition might have begun with *kataribe* and eventually became more

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[156] See n. 39.
[157] Graziosi (2002) 30-1. For these and other early attestations of *rhapsōdoi*, see González (2013) 399-416.
[158] Ready and Tsagalis (2018) 2-3.
[159] Ready and Tsagalis (2018) 3-4.
[160] Bundrick (2018) 76-97.
[161] Friis Johansen (1967); Snodgrass (1998).
[162] Duets were apparently frequent because they facilitated the training of apprentice singers by allowing them to perform with their masters (Hyōdō [2011] 169; Tokita [2015] 64).

formalized and fixed in written form under *biwa hōshi*, whose later loss of affiliation with

Buddhist temples led to some being called *biwa hiki* ("biwa strummers").[163] It is notable,

then, that while the terminology used for performers of oral tales like the *Heike* changed

at least three times in the course of their thousand-year history, their basic functions did

not. When we take this parallel into consideration for the *aoidos-rhapsōdos* problem, a

few key points arise. First, *aoidoi* and *rhapsōdoi* are neither compared with one another

nor said to have performed different functions in ancient literature, and both are always

associated with the performance of epic poetry generally and the Homeric poems

specifically. Second, the interchangeable use of the two terms by several authors,

particularly Pindar's use of the phrase *rhaptōn epeōn aoidoi* ("singers of stitched songs")

to describe the Homeridae (who are generally viewed by scholars as reciters of the

Homeric poems), speaks to the possibility of a gradual evolution of the terms rather than

a deliberate distinction between the two, and it might be that *aoidoi* and *rhapsōdoi* were

performers with different titles who, like performers of the *Heike*, did effectively the

same thing, albeit that the latter eventually came to rely on fixed written texts rather than

oral-formulaic composition.

Perhaps the notion of songs being "stitched" together found in the Pindar ode is

also suggestive of the role played by both *aoidoi* and *rhapsōdoi*, namely that they stitched

together episodes into tales in a manner similar to how *biwa hōshi* turned their own

episodes into the *Heike*. If true, this could also provide a useful clue to the distinction

between *aoidos* and *rhapsōdos*, as well as why usage of the latter eventually overtook the

former. While there have been several theories about the origin of the word

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[163] De Ferranti (2009) generally uses the term *biwa hiki* to refer to modern-day *Heike* performers,
regardless of religious affiliation.

rhapsōdos,[164] it does not seem coincidental that the episodes of the Homeric poems were called *rhapsōdiai*, which might indicate that rhapsodes simply took their name from the famous episodes they performed and the "stitching" process by which they formed them into a cohesive tale, or that they sang episodes from a tale already sewn together. This all could mean that singers began being called *rhapsōdoi*, "stitchers," because of the shift toward recitation of episodes, *rhapsōdiai* or "stitched things," which were drawn from fixed written texts in the years following the institution of the late 6th-century Panathenaic Rule.

Another factor that might have influenced this shift from oral-formulaic composition to recitation from the later 5th century onward would have been the widening gulf between the idiosyncratic, archaic Greek—often referred to as a *Kunstsprache* ("art language")[165]—used in the Homeric epics and the vernacular of the 5th and 4th centuries, as the meanings of certain words and phrases found in the poems were unknown even by this time in antiquity.[166] This likely speaks to the fixity of the text by this time as well as to the inability of 5th- and 4th-century singers to understand and reproduce the language of epic with the fluency necessary for oral-formulaic composition. The *Heike* tradition has yielded a modern parallel to this phenomenon at

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[164] There is no strong consensus on the origin of the word *rhapsōdos*, although more scholars have recently favored the idea that it means "stitcher of songs," as the Pindar reference to the Homeridae implies (Ready and Tsagalis [2018] 2). The other, less-likely etymology is that *rhapsōdos* came from *rhabdos* ("staff"), because of the staff *rhapsōdoi* were sometimes depicted in artwork carrying as a sort of professional accessory (the consistency of this depiction seems increasingly doubtful, see Bundrick [2018] 76-97). See Patzer (1952) 314-25 and González (2013) 336-8 for detailed discussions of possible etymologies.
[165] *Kunstsprache* is here used to denote the idea that Homeric Greek was in fact never a spoken language anywhere in Greece, but developed over time to fit the needs of poets who used oral formulaic composition. Scholars generally accept this notion, and it is supported by Homeric Greek's abundance of synonyms, unique forms, and morphology drawn from several Greek dialects. See Meister (1921); Hoekstra (1969); Janko (1982); Haug (2011).
[166] See Lord (1960) 30-67; Nagler (1967) 269-311; Foley (1991), (1997) 146-73, (1999).

work among some of the few remaining *biwa hōshi* who still perform parts of the tale.

Rutledge recounts his experience of three years as an apprentice to a blind *biwa hōshi*,

from whom he learned to memorize and perform several episodes of the *Heike*, and how

he noticed a tendency of his teacher's to confuse certain words and phrases in a manner

that suggested he had only a very general idea of what they meant.[167] While it is

certainly possible for formulas or epithets with unclear meanings to survive in an oral

tradition without troubling the process of oral-formulaic performance overmuch, their

preservation in written texts and the evolution of vernacular language over time would

gradually make oral-formulaic composition more difficult, a process attested to in the

Japanese tradition by the notable differences between the language of the *Heike* and

literary works of later centuries. This is also observable in the Greek tradition,

particularly when comparing the language of the Homeric poems with that of 5th-century

tragedy and the speeches, dialogues, and histories of the 4th century.

By the 4th century, then, oral-formulaic composition had effectively ceased in the

Homeric tradition, and the written texts used for recitation that were created as a result,

like the *rufubon* and musical notation texts of the *Heike*, are what survive today. Also

like the textual variants of the *Heike*, it was only at this later point in the tradition that

manuscripts of the *Iliad* seem to have taken on the characteristics of texts intended

primarily for reading, like book divisions and line numbers, much of which was probably

added by Alexandrian scholars. Beyond this point in its textual history the *Iliad* might

begin to diverge much more drastically from that of the *Heike*, since the Homeric poems

still underwent over two thousand years of transmission before our own modern editions

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[167] Rutledge (1993) 340-60.

of the texts were put together. While it is possible that the *Iliad* that emerged from the Hellenistic period matches quite closely with the one read today, we lack the evidence necessary to prove such a relationship. The Kakuichi *Heike* of our time, by comparison, matches its earliest copies much more closely, having been zealously attended to by *biwa hōshi* until its transfer to popular print media in the 18th century CE.

In light of the comparanda of the *Heike* tradition and the various factors listed above, it is possible that the best explanation for the shift from oral-formulaic composition to recitation based on written texts in the Greek epic tradition is that the popularity of the Homeric *Iliad* used in the Panathenaea led to the relative fixity of that text. This in turn encouraged the proliferation of written copies of the poem at the eventual expense of its oral performance tradition, which with the passage of time became more difficult to practice competently because of the evolution of the Greek language, and to the detriment of other poems in the Trojan Cycle, whose diminished popularity probably resulted in a reduced number of written copies to the extent that they are effectively lost to us. These written copies were likely created and maintained by poetic guilds like the Homeridae, whose association with the Homeric poems helped to ensure their relative fixity up through the 3rd century BCE, from which time copies of the poems deviated even less from one another and eventually came together as the Vulgate text known to later generations.

Conclusion

The complex interaction over time between the oral and written aspects of the *Heike* tradition thus suggest several intriguing possibilities for a similar oral-written relationship of the *Iliad*. As with the *Heike*, it is possible that the *Iliad* was originally

made up of several interrelated episodes, only a handful of which could have been sung

in the course of a normal performance, and that more of these episodes were added over

time to those that made up the "core" narrative of the poem. While this would suggest

that the *Iliad* was not in its final form when first written down in the 8th century BCE, the

relationship between guilds of bards like the Homeridae and epic poems like the *Iliad*

provide a useful explanation for why this might have been so. For if a group of poets,

trained in the oral-formulaic technique of composition that had given life to the first

episodes of the poem, had maintained written copies of their tales, it is entirely plausible

that they could have added more episodes to those already there, thus expanding the story

and possibly leading to the creation of yet other epics that would come to make up the

Trojan Cycle. This process of "stitching" together episodes into complete tales might

also suggest why the terms *aoidoi* and *rhapsōdoi* were used to refer to performers of the

Homeric poems. Finally, the involvement of the Homeridae and the *Iliad* with the

Panathenaic Festival in the late 6th century BCE suggests that this process of episode

aggregation likely reached its conclusion around that time, and the resulting collaboration

between the poets' guild and Athenian elites led to Athens serving as a hub from which

written copies of the now relatively fixed *Iliad* were disseminated throughout the Greek

world.

CHAPTER II: COMPETITIVE WARRIOR CULTURE AND COMBAT

The historical accuracy and value of the Homeric poems are matters of age-old debate, disputed even in antiquity. Recently, scholars have tended to view the poems as either representative of a roughly historical society and its practices from around the 9th to 8th centuries BCE, or as a patchwork of exaggerated or entirely fictional elements of Greek society at various stages ranging from the Mycenaean to the Archaic eras.[1] The somewhat unsettling likelihood, in light of how the poems were probably composed (as explored in Chapter 1), is that both of these conclusions are in part correct. The social, political, and military culture of Homeric society is relatively consistent and coherent, and the poems may provide a mostly faithful representation of Iron Age Greek culture, albeit with a heroic veneer. There are, however, many discrepancies between the poems' depiction of the Greek world and the picture of pre-Archaic Greece provided by archaeology. While the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* seem to have been lovingly tended over the course of their centuries-long development and are mostly consistent in their internal details, because of the gradual, regional nature of their development, echoes of earlier and later epochs found their way in over time and were grouped around pre-existing episodes.

There has likewise been much debate over the historical accuracy of the *Heike monogatari*,[2] but here, as in several other instances, we are aided by the *Heike*'s own textual history—as discussed in Chapter 1, the tale's *yomihon* manuscript tradition consisted primarily of annalistic prose histories of the late Heian era and the Genpei

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[1] Van Wees (1992) 10-22; n. 28 distinguishes between a 'patchwork' and an 'amalgam;' the latter being a jumble in which one cannot recognize the components from which it was first assembled, whereas the former's pieces are readily discernible. Van Wees also argues here that the term 'patchwork' is fitting "if one believes that the epics are in places inconsistent and juxtapose incompatible elements"—which I do.
[2] See Oyler (2006) 1-16, 24-8; Selinger (2014) 10-12.

War—and by a considerably more robust historical record in corroborating its details. Thus its culture is, like that of the *Iliad*, also mostly internally consistent, but it is also provably consistent in many ways with the historical world of early medieval Japan. This apparent historical faithfulness can shine a light upon the crepuscular darkness of early Greek history, since several aspects of Japanese political and military culture bear striking similarities to that found in the Homeric poems, and, I argue, these similarities can usefully in turn be extended to the historical world of Mycenaean and Iron Age Greece, with significant results

Militarily, the hyper-competitive culture of Japanese *bushi* is remarkably similar to that of Homer's warriors. Both groups are overridingly concerned with the external indications of honor and status attendant upon successful warriors—trophies in the form of armor for the Greeks, heads for the Japanese—and both also place high value on material rewards taken from martial spoils or awarded for exemplary conduct in war and elsewhere. So powerful is the draw of these status-objects that their pursuit alters the way in which both groups do battle in the *Iliad* and *Heike*: fights sometimes seem to revolve entirely around the pursuit of fallen friends' and foes' armor or heads to the near exclusion of any broader tactical objectives. Although these objects proving martial success vary between the two societies, they nevertheless serve the same purpose and exert similar force on the military and political culture of both groups. As such, most interactions between characters in either the *Iliad* or the *Heike* can be seen as part of a grand competition for status, one in which violence is often the chief means by which a warrior can strengthen his reputation among his peers.

As will be shown, this reputation is central to the respect that a warrior receives from his fellow fighters, as well as to his ability to command other men. There are several ways for a man to enhance his reputation in the warrior cultures of the Greeks and Japanese, but every path effectively requires some form of participation in combat. Warriors thus go to remarkable—and sometimes creative—lengths to be noticed in battle, vying with one another to seek out and defeat famous opponents by announcing their own names, to perform notable deeds like feats of strength or dexterity, to be the first to do something that other men are attempting in a slower, more timid fashion, or even to die in suitably heroic ways. Beyond these methods, however, the most popular means of signaling one's presence in battle and building status in each tale is trophy-taking.

What we have here, then, is a generally reliable set of incentives that encourage warriors to remain in combat, with the further demand that leaders and other eminent men fight as conspicuously and, ideally, as effectively as possible. Indeed, both cultures expect that leaders and great warriors should fight at the forefront of battle and perform great deeds, but in the tales the most important part of this obligation is that these men must be *seen* doing so. In the *Heike*, for example, Narida Gorō reminds us of this when he tells Hirayama Sueshige: "Do not be too eager to attack first, Hirayama . . . To be first you must have the others behind you, to witness your success or failure. To charge in alone among many and get yourself killed for your pains—what is the point of that?" (*Heike* 9.10).

We will see in this chapter that not only is competition for status a primary motivator for the warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike*, but also that it remained a powerful driving force in subsequent Greek and Japanese history that shaped the future culture of

both regions for centuries after the tales had reached their final forms. While many of the

heroic requirements listed above seem to have vanished from normal combat situations

by the time we have more reliable accounts of historical Greek and Japanese battles in the

Classical and Kamakura periods, some, particularly trophy-taking and the ideal of

participation before an audience of other warriors, remained. Unlike the Greeks,

however, the evolution of the Japanese way of war can actually be traced from the

roughly historical descriptions of single combats found in the *Heike* to later fighting

methods that placed less emphasis on the bow, the traditional weapon of elite Japanese

warriors, and more on a large-scale version of the mêlée fighting into which the *Heike*'s

struggles often devolve. The Greeks of the Archaic and Classical periods arguably

maintained similar emphases on conspicuous participation and trophy-taking in the ranks

of the later hoplite phalanx, but there is considerable uncertainty among scholars as to

how hoplite-style fighting first came about. Uncertainty also enshrouds the combat

methods of the *Iliad*, but it has been argued that the patchwork battle scenes of the *Iliad*

contain occasional tantalizing glimpses of the early phalanx.[3] Using the battle scenes and

similar status-obsessed warrior culture of the *Heike* as well as its influence on the

subsequent evolution of Japanese combat as a model, it is possible to suggest that

Homeric warriors' fiercely competitive fighting over bodies and trophies—which is

typically characterized by men fighting in closely packed masses—might actually explain

how the phalanx was originally conceived and show that trophy-taking was a dominant

driving force in the transformation of Greek warfare from the Iron Age to the Classical

period.

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[3] Latacz (1977); Pritchett (1985) 7-33.

II.1: Name-Announcing

   The warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike*, rarely much for subtlety, tend to take an

extremely direct approach to ensuring that they are noticed in battle, and men in both

tales engage in the ritual of shouting out their names and even extended genealogies in

the middle of combat as they search for worthy opponents. The heroes of the *Iliad* are

generally much more verbose in their name-announcing, with rulers like Glaucus and

Idomeneus boasting at great length of their descent from the mythical figures

Bellerophon (Hom., *Il.* 6.145-211) and Minos (13.445-54). Homeric heroes will also

deliver genealogies at odd moments in the narrative—perhaps an effect of the *Iliad*'s

gradual accretion of verses and stories discussed in Chapter 1—as when Diomedes gives

a lengthy description of his ancestry to a small assembly of his fellow Greek princes

before giving basic tactical advice (14.110-25), or when Aeneas details his own family

history for more than fifty lines immediately after reminding Achilles that they both

already knew it (20.200-58). Despite these oddities, the poem is also littered with smaller

genealogies, usually about freshly felled heroes and given by the poet—but sometimes

even by a hero's killer—that likely are intended to glorify their killers and show that

Greek and Trojan heroes are slaying worthy opponents.[4]

   Genealogies are rarer in the *Heike*, but announcements of names—called

nanori—are much more frequent, and every major battle features at least one, if not

several, *nanori* that are used to challenge enemy warriors. The first *nanori* found in the

tale is also one of the most picturesque, and features the Miidera temple monk Jōmyō

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[4] Lendon (2005) 26 holds a similar view. Van Wees, taking his cue from Adkins (1975) 41-7, argues that genealogies are intended to link heroes to the gods—ideally Zeus, the mightiest Olympian—in order to give their opponents an idea of their chances at victory (van Wees [1996] 40-1). For a thematic analysis of the different extended genealogies in the *Iliad*, see Lang (1994) 1-6.

striding out alone onto the beams of a dismantled bridge, where he shouts: "you will have long heard tell of me. Here I am now, before your eyes! At Miidera everyone knows me: me, the practitioner-monk Tsutsui no Jōmyō Meishū, a man stalwart against a thousand! Any of you with the stomach for it, come, come and fight me! See how you do!" (*Heike* 4.11). Another notable *nanori*, this one including genealogy, is given later in the tale by the high-ranking Minamoto retainer Kajiwara Kagetoki in the midst of a heated battle outside the fortress of Ichi-no-Tani:

> During the Later Three Years' War,
> when Hachimantarō Yoshiie
> attacked the fortress of Senbuku
> at Kanazawa, in Dewa,
>> a young man in his sixteenth year led the assault. Shot through the
>> left eye, right back to his neckpiece, he still managed an answering
>> arrow, slew his foe, and left a great name: Kamakura no Gongorō
>> Kagemasa. I am his descendant, Kajiwara Heizō Kagetoki, a
>> warrior worthy to face a thousand!
> Any man with the heart to fight me,
> let him kill me and show his lord my head!   (*Heike* 9.11)

Just like their Homeric counterparts, then, Japanese warriors love to link themselves to the heroic deeds of their ancestors.

The function of these rituals appears two-fold. On the one hand, the Homeric or Japanese warrior's never-ending quest to enhance his reputation demands that he have a prominent place in battle—and one can think of few methods more effective for this purpose than shouting one's name and family history from the front lines. On the other hand, both prominent and less prominent warriors, whose own names would not be worth announcing, flock toward famous opponents who announce themselves in the hope of killing them and building their own reputations.[5] As such, name-announcing and the

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[5] Van Wees (1996) argues that "the prospect of becoming famous for individual deeds of prowess is . . . an incentive only to the very strong and the very brave" (24), and that, by the logic of the poems, no lowly

giving of genealogies in battle serve a similar function to performing notable deeds, since they undeniably mark one's presence in combat and attract opponents who will bring further opportunities for reputation-building.

II.2: Being the Best or Being First

Performing impressive or novel deeds, both in and outside of battle, is also a highly desirable way for Greek and Japanese warriors to enhance their status. The *Iliad* frequently mentions which warriors are the first to kill an enemy in a fight (*Il*. 4.457-72, 6.5-11, 8.253-60, 16.569-615),[6] and men on both sides of the conflict seem to be in constant competition with both enemies and allies to kill opponents in this noticeable way. Aside from their efforts to seek out and kill notable foes, Greek and Trojan heroes also hurl huge stones at their enemies, which the poet makes sure to mention are so large that even two mortal men in his own time would be unable to lift them (12.380-4, 12.447-9, 20.285-7).

Other basic combat skills like spear-throwing are also a source of much pride and competition among Homeric warriors. The most powerful heroes are able to pierce the bronze shields and cuirasses of their opponents with a single spear cast (3.355-60, 5.533-40, 7.248-54, 11.434-8, 17.516-20), and other, more creative killings, such as when

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warrior would seek to fight or take the armor of a foe above his social status. This denial of lesser men's ability to gain fame through killing great foes seems to be belied by the fact that so many men flock to the corpses of notable warriors, presumably with the hope of stripping their armor or of killing other men attempting to do the same. While the possession of armor, which has its own economic value, might be classified as an incentive separate from reputation-building or glory-seeking, we must remember that wealth itself is representative of *timē* ("honor, worth") in Homeric society, and that *timē* is only supposed to accrue to the worthy (Griffin [1980] 14-5; Finkelberg [1998] 15-8). Furthermore, the case of Patroclus's death at the hands of Euphorbus, an otherwise unknown warrior who appears just long enough to help kill Patroclus (*Il*.16.786-817) and in turn be killed a few hundred lines later by Menelaus (17.9-69), is an instructive example of this oversight.

[6] Lendon (2005) 24-5.

Telamonian Ajax decapitates an enemy with a spear throw (14.465-8), are no doubt

meant to showcase heroes' enormous strength. Archery is both derided (12. 384-95) and

praised (8.273-308) by the *Iliad*'s heroes, and although later Greeks seem to have

retrojected their negative attitude toward archery onto the *Iliad*, Homeric warriors appear

to have no qualms about excellent archery being a source of glory and a valid form of

heroic competition.[7]

There are also several instances in which heroes hold their ground, presumably

against great numbers of enemies, in a combined show of courage and fighting prowess

(5.520-7, 17.1-69, 123-39, 288-318), as when Odysseus remarks before being surrounded

by a group of Trojans that he "know[s] that cowards walk away from war, but whoever is

preeminent in battle, surely for him there is great need to hold his ground boldly, whether

he is struck or strikes another" (11.408-10). There are other instances in the *Iliad* when

the importance of holding one's ground is not valued (11.456-63, 587-91, 12.400-7,

14.402-10, 15.726-46, 17.106-22),[8] but, if anything, these exceptions only strengthen the

idea that holding ground was a form of competition among heroes. Just as the many

thrown spears that miss their marks or bounce uselessly off shields make those missiles

that pierce shield and cuirass appear all the more impressive, so too the presence of

heroes who shrink from standing their ground makes those who do remain and fight that

much more notable. It was, moreover, only after the advent of the hoplite phalanx that

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[7] For the apparent contradiction between positive and negative remarks on archery in Homer, see Hijmans (1976) 343-52; Lendon (2005) 34-5. For hostility toward archery in later antiquity, see Lendon (2005) 47-8, n. 12. In the *Iliad*, Athena appeals to Pandarus to shoot Menelaus to get honor and glory (4.93-103), Teucer has a killing spree with his bow from behind Ajax's shield (8.273-308), Ajax specifically requests that Teucer fetch his bow and arrows to aid him in battle (15.436-41), and an archery contest is part of Patroclus's funeral games along with other legitimate competitive events (23.850-83).
[8] Schwertfeger (1982) 254-7.

holding ground become a true imperative of Greek combat, at which time it arguably

became the apex of competition for Greek warriors.[9]

This constant competitive drive is also responsible for several narrative oddities in

the story of the *Iliad*. During Achilles's furious rout of the Trojans, Priam's youngest son

Polydorus runs through the middle of the battle in order to show off his superlative speed

to the audience of warriors on both sides—speed of foot being a competitive excellence

among Greek heroes, as we are constantly reminded by Achilles's epithet "swift-

footed"—only to be transfixed through the back by Achilles's spear (20.407-18).[10] Such

competitive displays of greatness also occur outside battle, such as when Nestor

intentionally brings a giant, four-handled drinking cup from his home in Pylos so that he

can show his guests, who have a hard time even moving it when full, that he can both lift

and drink from it easily (11.632-7). Finally, the grand scale of Patroclus's funeral appears

to be a bid by Achilles to put on the grandest funeral ever witnessed by the Homeric

world, and features a vast number of sacrificed animals and a heap of material goods

being burnt upon a massive pyre (23.13-257).

In the *Heike*, similarly, *bushi* are in constant competition to be the first man to do

nearly anything, be it attack an enemy, arrive at the walls of an enemy fortress (*Heike*

9.10-11), or cross a river (9.1-2). Commanders and individuals will willingly choose to

attack more heavily defended locations—say one gate out of several—because it will

grant them more glory (1.15, 9.10, 11.1, 11.5), and warriors will regularly abandon the

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[9] Hölkeskamp (1997) collects the literature (494-501); Brelich (1961); Detienne (1968) 119-42; Lonis (1979) 25-40; Lendon (2005) 47-52.

[10] For an examination of different motivations (including personal glory) for fighting in the *Iliad* and their depiction by the poet, see Hellman (2000) 157-69. Lendon (2005) 20-38 argues that the purpose of many of the extended battle scenes in the *Iliad* is to show its heroes in competition for status, and gives several more examples of possibly competitive behavior.

comparative safety and tactical advantage of their battle groups in order to challenge opponents to single combat or simply to be seen doing something brave by the other warriors on the field, be they friend or foe. One particularly notable incident sees Kumagai no Jirō Naozane and his son Kojirō sneaking by night beyond the lines of the Minamoto force, then preparing to attack the mountain fortress of the Taira at Ichi-no-Tani the following day, so they can be the first ones to arrive at the enemy's gates; after slinking around in the dark for several hours, they spend several more standing outside the walls of the fortress announcing their names and shouting challenges at the warriors inside, who eventually get so annoyed that they send out a small group of men to try to silence them (9.10).

Most *Heike* warriors' competitive energies, however, are devoted to displaying their prowess in archery, the primary mode of combat among the *bushi* of early medieval Japan.[11] *Bushi* from both the Taira and Minamoto clans not only work hard to be seen taking difficult and impressive shots, but they also place great importance on the size and power of the bows they shoot, and shooting arrows of greater-than-normal length is also considered a mark of great pride. A lengthy speech by Saitō Sanemori, a Taira vassal and former Minamoto retainer, explains that among the Minamoto of the east—who have the reputation in the *Heike* of being the toughest and most skilled fighters—a warrior cannot be considered a notable archer unless he shoots arrows of at least 15 handbreadths in length from bows that take five or six men to string and are capable of penetrating two or three suits of armor with a single shot (5.11).[12]

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[11] See n. 41.
[12] Nowhere in the *Heike* do we find a warrior from either side of the conflict firing arrows as long as Sanemori's ideal ones. Nasu no Yoichi, the finest archer among the Minamoto, shoots arrows that are only

The warriors of the *Heike* are so pre-occupied with feats of archery that, in the spirit of Polydorus's ill-fated mid-battle sprint and somewhat similar to the archery contest featured in Patroclus's funeral games (*Il*. 23.850-83), they will even hold impromptu archery competitions in the middle of battles. The most detailed of these has the Minamoto warrior Nasu no Yoichi riding out into the sea on horseback to shoot a fan the Taira have attached to the mast of one of their ships; when he successfully hits the fan, men on both sides are so impressed by the feat that they cheer loudly, with Taira warriors even pounding the gunwales of their ships in approval of their opponent's skill (*Heike* 11.4). Similar scenes play out elsewhere in the tale, with several instances in which warriors shoot arrows at each other from impressive distances as a way of challenging those on the other side to make a return shot (11.5, 11.8). In keeping with their constant need to be recognized for their deeds by warriors on either side of the conflict, some *bushi* even resort to having their names written in lacquer on the shafts of their arrows so that they can claim credit for particularly admirable shots (11.8).

The competitive warrior culture of the *Heike* also places emphasis on shooting great distances and killing opponents with powerful bow shots, but there also seems to have been some competitive value in being struck by enemy arrows. For example, following Jōmyō Meishū's heroic stand on the dismantled bridge over the Uji River, he falls back to the gate of Byōdō-in temple and counts 63 arrow hits in his armor, only a handful of which managed to wound him slightly (4.11). Later in the tale, Musashi no Saburōzaemon Arikuni is praised for fighting to the death, slaying many foes while his armor bristles with arrows (7.7), and the quality of Imai Kanehira's armor renders him

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12 handbreadths and 3 fingers long (11.4), and the longest arrow recorded in the tale is only 14 handbreadths long—and fired by a Taira warrior (11.8).

immune to the arrows of fifty men while he fights them singlehandedly (9.4). The language of these passages thus illustrates the effective "rules" for taking arrow hits, and while there is incentive for *bushi* to be struck by as many arrows as possible, the point of greatest importance here seems to be that the warriors remain relatively uninjured (arrow wounds notwithstanding, the direct cause of Arikuni's death is unclear, and Kanehira commits suicide after firing all his own arrows). Although the *Heike* passages do not mention this explicitly, it can also be inferred from the duel-like combat of Japanese mounted archers that "catching" arrows in armor would have proven a warrior's ability to avoid an opponent's missiles by skillful riding and positioning—the greater the number of arrows, the greater his skill and the honor owed to it. At the Battle of Ichi-no-Tani, Kumagai Naozane advises his son on how to position his armor in order to avoid being wounded: "make sure your armor is straight, let no arrow work its way through, and keep your neck plate tight against you. See that nothing gets under your helmet" (9.10).

The constant competitive drive in Greek and Japanese warrior culture is shown well through these examples, not just by the frequency and consistency with which they appear in both tales, but also by the surprising variety of ways in which warriors strive to prove their worth and increase their status through exemplary performance. It is unlikely that these forms of competition were consciously invented to encourage warriors to fight and perform well, but it does make some sense that exemplary performance according to the combat paradigms of a given culture would bring with it a goodly share of honor and prestige. This not only helps to explain why the warrior cultures depicted in the *Iliad* and *Heike* seem to have transferred with relative ease into the real-world practices of later

Greeks and Japanese, but it also might illustrate at least in part how battlefield

competition developed in other, even more extreme ways.

II.3: Dying Well

So fragile is status in these tales and so fierce the competition to maintain it that,

to a lesser degree in the *Iliad* and to a greater in *Heike*, the very act of dying becomes a

competitive event. Near the *Iliad*'s end, Patroclus is so concerned with warrior status that

he spends his final moments reminding Hector that he should not be boasting too proudly

about killing him, since Apollo had knocked off his armor and stunned him while the

Trojan Euphorbus stabbed him before Hector's spear got anywhere close—reminding

Hector that he was third in line at killing Patroclus is a means of decreasing the honor

Hector might gain from killing him, and thus serves as Patroclus's final insult to his foe

(*Il*. 16.843-54).[13] Later in the poem, Hector's own decision to stand before the walls of

Troy to fight Achilles instead of seeking refuge inside the city is also motivated by the

powerful demands of status in Homeric society. While he recognizes that doing so will

not only ensure his own death but also will condemn his family and countrymen to

destruction and slavery, Hector remarks that he would rather die gloriously in battle

"having done some great deed for men yet to be born to hear" (22.304-5) than be slain

without a struggle.[14] Achilles also willingly rejects the possibility of a long life of peace

and plenty, choosing instead to avenge Patroclus's death and, like Hector, ensure that

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[13] There has been plenty of discussion of this episode: see Reinhardt (1961) 308-40; Farron (1978) 48-50; Janko (1992) 408-10.

[14] This is also a topic of some controversy. Some have argued that Hector here is compelled to fight by shame, not out of a desire to enhance his personal glory: see Fenik (1978) 69-90; de Jong (1987) 78; van Wees (1988) 20; Cairns (1993) 81-2. For the opposite view: Redfield (1975) 154; Farron (1978) 52-3; Finley (1978) 116-7.

later generations of men will remember him for his deeds, no matter the cost (18.98-126).[15]

The uncompromising pursuit of status in medieval Japanese society is just as self-centered as that found in the *Iliad*, and, given that "good death" scenes were very popular elements of the *Heike*'s narrative,[16] there seems to have been much more enthusiasm for and more widespread approval of dying in battle—whether at the hands of enemies or, more famously, by one's own blade. As such, the *Heike* is replete with death scenes that are fairly evenly split between suicide and dying while fighting. Our first introduction to the practice of warrior suicide comes after a Minamoto loss at the battle at the Battle of Uji, which sees the Minamoto commander, Minamoto no Yorimasa, retreat to the nearby Byōdō-in pavilion so that he might compose a poem, chant the name of Amida Buddha,[17] and commit *seppuku*.[18] After taking his own life, one of Yorimasa's attendants follows his instructions to cut off his head, tie it to a stone, and throw it in the Uji River so it cannot be taken as a trophy (*Heike* 4.12). This behavior is mimicked elsewhere in the same chapter (4.12), and also in the later mass-suicide of nearly the entire Taira clan at

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[15] Mueller (1984) 58-9; van Wees (1996) 57.

[16] While there are plenty of these to be found in the Kakuichi text of the *Heike*, earlier textual variants like the Genpei tōjōroku (which centers its focus on the exploits of otherwise unknown warriors from the Chiba branch of the Taira clan, who fought for Minamoto Yoritomo in the Genpei War) and Engyō-bon feature an even larger number of death scenes. For the Genpei tōjōroku, see Chapter 1, n. 90; for the Engyō, see Chapter 1, 56-8, 62-4.

[17] Characters throughout the *Heike* will chant the *nembutsu* in the moments before death in the hope of being taken to Amida's Pure Land (*Heike* 4.11, 4.12, 7.9, 8.4, 9.19, 10.12, 11.9, 11.18, 12.9). This is a notable reflection of the strong Buddhist influence on the *Heike* and of the Kakuichi text's incorporation of Pure Land ideals into its narrative. For Amida, Pure Land Buddhism, and the *nembutsu*, see Chapter 1, n. 88.

[18] This is possibly the first recorded instance of *seppuku* in Japanese history, although an account given in the *Hōgen monogatari* depicts Minamoto no Tametomo, Yorimasa's fourth cousin, as the first to commit suicide by cutting his belly with a dagger—hence the term *seppuku* ("cutting [the] belly")—sometime after his exile because of the Hōgen Rebellion of 1156 (*Hōgen* 3.16). Because of the uncertainty over dates of composition for both *Hōgen* and *Heike*, however, it is difficult to determine whether Tametomo's chronologically earlier suicide was sung of before Yorimasa's in the *Heike*.

the conclusion of the Battle of Dan-no-Ura (11.11), and it reveals an overriding concern among warriors that their remains might not be desecrated or seized by unworthy foes that is also found, albeit for different, religiously motivated reasons, in the *Iliad*.[19]

The other variant of the idealized death scene in the *Heike* features a warrior of merit fighting bravely and ferociously against overwhelming odds and killing as many opponents as possible before succumbing to his wounds. This process typically entails the warrior first emptying his quiver into a mass of enemies (7.7, 8.8, 9.4), after which he will usually fight to the death with sword and spear (4.12, 7.7, 8.8, 12.8), or, in some cases, his bare hands (11.10, 12.9). Sometimes a warrior will even temporarily recover from a mortal blow in order to pin down and behead an enemy (4.12), or he will use his heroic strength to hold an opponent in a crushing grip that ensures his foe will join him in death (11.10).

A blending of the two types of good death scenes is the suicide of Imai Kanehira, a retainer of Kiso no Yoshinaka. Upon seeing his lord's death, Kanehira quickly empties his quiver, kills eight men, and is pin-cushioned with arrows as he rides toward his remaining foes (9.4). These shots fail to kill him, and, taunting his opponents, he leaps off his horse toward them with his sword in his mouth, thus impaling himself as soon as he hits the ground (9.4). Gruesome details aside, Kanehira's grimly creative technique of jumping headlong from his horse with sword in mouth is pure showmanship—the crowd of enemies gathered before him is effectively an audience that will ensure the tale of his

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[19] Hector presses Ajax for agreement to return his remains to the Trojans if he loses their duel (*Il.* 7.67-75); Sarpedon entreats Glaucus to protect his body (16.492-501); the Lycians are greatly distressed by the Greeks' possession of Sarpedon's body (16.140-68); the Greeks form a fence around Patroclus's body to defend it from despoliation (17.266-73, 412-9); Xanthus conspires with Simoïs to bury Achilles's body deep under water so the Greeks cannot find it (21.309-23); Hector's concern over the treatment of his remains by Achilles (22.248-59, 337-42).

death spreads, winning him posthumous renown because of its bravery and novelty. That Kanehira feels obliged to commit suicide in a novel way speaks to the competitive aspect of death in medieval Japanese warrior culture, since he probably assumed that simply kneeling down and cutting his belly would not have earned him as much fame as impaling himself after a heroic leap from horseback.

The warriors of the *Heike* thus have much in common with Hector when he stands before the gates of Troy. While there are often options available for them to flee to safety—exile being a not uncommon sentence for captured enemies in the *Heike* who do not defect—these men choose instead to remain and face certain death for the sake of reputation. Plenty of heroes in both tales flee from combat (*Il.* 11.575-91, 13.156-78, 13.590-600, 15.726-46, 17.106-22; *Heike* 5.11, 7.6, 7.7, 8.8, 9.10, 9.14, 11.3, 11.5), and this curiously seems to bring them little or no shame despite both tales' frequent injunctions against flight (*Il.* 5.528-32, 11.408-10, 15.561-4; *Heike* 9.11, 11.1, 11.7).[20] This dual consciousness might even be another piece of evidence for the gradual and occasionally inconsistent accumulation of material in both tales over several centuries. But the consistent presence of such vivid and memorable scenes in which heroes hold their ground and die well perhaps speaks to an overall preference for these values in the hyper-competitive warrior cultures of the Greeks and Japanese. As with Hector, then, so

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[20] Van Wees (1988) 5 lists instances in which men will run away after missing the target of a spear throw, and also emphasizes, perhaps too much, how frequently Homeric warriors fall back from the front lines or choose not to stand their ground in combat ([1996] 8-11). Lendon (2005) 34-5 argues that there is a contradictory logic in the competitive ethics of the *Iliad*, since both standing ground and running away are at different times forms of competition, such as when Hector runs from Achilles and is likened positively to the winner of a footrace.

with the monks of Mt. Hiei in the Kyoto district of Hachijō: "those of them who feared

shame died fighting; the shameless fled" (8.10).[21]

II.4: Trophy-taking

As we have seen, each of the methods of seeking status mentioned above affects

the way the warriors of the *Iliad* and *Heike* behave in battle. Combatants eager to gain

fame will seek out well-known opponents, often falling victim to these men's own efforts

to preserve and enhance their reputations by vanquishing their challengers. Others are

too concerned with doing something first, showing off some martial skill, or dying

bravely in battle to pay much attention to the orders of their commanders. While these

behaviors sometimes make men fight in unexpected ways, they do at least motivate them

to fulfill the basic tactical requirement of killing enemy warriors and therefore are not a

great impediment to military success. But both groups also possess a notable predilection

for taking trophies from dead enemies—armor in Homer and heads in the *Heike*. As

physical objects that generally can be traced with ease to their original owners, these

trophies seem to be the most reliable means of increasing one's status.[22] The grisly

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[21] The word rendered as 'shame' here is *haji*, but Tyler's translation alters the construction of this line from the original text, which might be more precisely translated as "for those indifferent to [shame] the outcome was flight."

[22] For the Japanese, a head's owner is identified with the aid of *nanori* given by the warriors themselves and of head tags attached to the hair or ear by the decapitator or his attendant(s). Notable warriors in the *Iliad* are identified in several instances by their arms and armor: Diomedes by his helmet, shield, and horses (*Il.* 5.181-3); Ajax by his giant shield (11.526-7); and Patroclus is famously mistaken for Achilles while using Achilles's armor and horses (16.40-2, 278-82). Moreover, Achilles is also known for his use of a distinctively massive spear (19.387-91), and Agamemnon wears armor ornately worked with gold inlay and what is likely niello (see Gray [1954] 1-15) (11.15-46). There also appear to be warriors on the field who are not dressed in bronze armor: two men killed by Agamemnon are stripped of their *chitōnas* ("tunics") (11.100)—here not accompanied by the *chalkeos* ("of bronze") necessary to distinguish them from their softer counterparts (for the former: 13.439; the latter: 2.42, 262, 416, 3.56, 5.113, 736, 10.490, 11.21)—and the Locrians under Oïlean Ajax are said to not follow their leader directly into battle because they have no armor, bearing only bows and slings (13.712-8); the same Ajax is said in the Catalog of Ships to wear a linen cuirass (2.527-35). This might mean that only a handful of wealthier—and thereby better known—men possessed the full panoply that would have been highly desirable loot. Van Wees (1996) 32-4 uses the

practice of trophy-taking in battle is thus by far the most pervasive form of status-

conscious fighting, and it affects the way battles are fought in both tales to an even

greater degree than other bravery-displaying behavior. Because warriors are more

concerned with collecting these status objects than with pursuing tactical objectives,

battles are effectively structured around these competitions for trophies.

In the *Iliad*, the momentum of nearly every battle in which the plot is not being

advanced revolves around the Greeks and Trojans either attempting to strip the armor

from an enemy corpse or trying to prevent opponents from stripping the body of an ally

(*Il.* 4.532-8; 5.617-26; 13.383-423; 13.462-99; 13.506-11; 13.516-40; 13.549-55; 14.442-

50; 15.422-8; 15.515-45; 15.583-90; 16.490-683; 16.737-83; 17.123-39). Because the

arms of a fallen foe are such a tangible representation of status—for if a warrior

possesses an enemy's arms, he can likely claim the augmented status from killing him,

even if this was not actually the case—Homeric warriors will suddenly shift from

skirmishing in a rather relaxed manner[23] to one of deadly seriousness in their attempts to

claim or defend the possessions of a fallen man. This predictably leads to even more

fatalities, and whichever side gets the better of the exchange will eventually claim all the

Heike as a loose comparison to argue that Homeric heroes are not identified by their armor in the same way as the *bushi* of *Heike*, and that generally men are hard to identify in battle. This seems problematic, because van Wees argues in preceding pages that Homeric warriors are, with few exceptions, all familiar to each other and easily recognized in the middle of battle (31-2), and because he fails to take into account the full weight of the evidence found in *Heike*. While it is true that Japanese warriors used the colored lacing patterns of their armor for identification (Conlan [2003] 34), there are not actually many variations found in the *Heike*; of the 65 "dressing scenes" in the tale, 51 feature descriptions of armor, the vast majority of which have green, black, or red lacing. The *Heike* does mention notable pieces of heirloom equipment similar to those of Achilles and Agamemnon (*Heike* 2.6, 4.6, 5.11, 10.10), but none of these arms ever plays a role in identifying men on the battlefield, and living warriors instead rely heavily on *nanori* to fulfill this function, while the dead are identified by tags or, when possible, simple recognition.
[23] Van Wees (1994a) 1-9, (1996) 8-10.

bodies of the fallen and push back their retreating foes, killing more men in the process and shifting the momentum of battle in their favor.

Beside displaying some gruesomely creative deaths worthy of a modern summer blockbuster, these passages also remind us that much of the killing in a Homeric battle occurs in chain sequences[24] that are begun by a notable warrior's death. Indeed, these deadly struggles essentially see the Trojans and Greeks caught in a tug-of-war over a fallen warrior's body (one scene even sees Hector and Patroclus literally pulling at the feet and head of the dead Trojan Cebriones as their comrades fight around them [16.751-76]), where men regularly die of close-range stabbing wounds (4.468-9, 11.424-45, 13.385-95, 14.440-4, 16.306-50) and spear casts also commonly miss famous heroes only to hit their comrades thanks to the close quarters in which the men are fighting (4.492-500, 13.516-8, 15.520-4, 17.610-7). Sometimes warriors will form makeshift shield walls before a corpse (11. 592-5, 14.462-88, 17.266-73),[25] and even surround it to ward off enemy missiles and would-be looters. These dense formations and shield barriers often stymie enemy efforts to take the defended corpse, and they also serve to push warriors together into closer and much deadlier combat.

A sequence from the indecisive fighting of Book 13 illustrates this process well. The struggle begins when Teucer kills Imbrius with a spear thrust, then rushes forward to strip his corpse (13.169-82). He is driven off by Hector, who throws a spear at Teucer but misses, hitting Amphimachus instead (13.183-7). Hector then runs in to strip Amphimachus's corpse, but Telamonian Ajax pushes him back with a spear thrust

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[24] Fenik (1968) 10; Mueller (1984) 98-101.
[25] Following Patroclus's death, the Greeks are enjoined to "stand firm beside [Patroclus's] corpse and do battle hand to hand" (17.356-9) in order to protect his body. This appears to be effective, since several Trojans are unable to harm the Greeks with their spears thanks to the shield wall.

(13.188-94). Next, the Greeks manage to drag both bodies behind their front line, where the two Ajaxes strip Imbrius's corpse and Oïlean Ajax, angry over Amphimachus's death, cuts off the head and hurls it spinning into the Trojan ranks until it comes to rest at Hector's feet (13.194-205). Another passage in Book 14 sees Ajax strike Hector with a huge rock, which knocks Hector out cold and leads both sides to believe he is dead (14.402-32). A frenzied mêlée over Hector's unconscious body then triggers another long sequence, similar to the one above, in which many warriors are killed on both sides and the Greeks ultimately push the Trojans back while killing even more men after Hector revives and escapes from the fray (14.440-522). An even longer sequence appears in Book 16 in which both sides fight over Sarpedon's mangled corpse and armor (16.534-665), and nearly all of Book 17 is devoted to the Greeks' and Trojans' struggle over Patroclus's body clad in Achilles's panoply.

In other passages, many of the men who die do not fall in a face-to-face fight with a worthy foe, but often while they are attempting to drag off or strip an enemy corpse in the middle of the fighting.[26] So powerful is the competitive drive among these warriors that to secure these status-objects they ignore the seemingly obvious necessities of keeping an eye on their opponents and protecting themselves from harm. What is even more surprising about this behavior, however, is that far more warriors nonchalantly strip a corpse in the middle of a fight without injury than meet with fatal consequences.[27] Agamemnon, perhaps in keeping with his reputation for greed, stops to strip all but two of the eight men he slays in his *aristeia* sequence in Book 11 (11.91-247), even going so

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[26] Fatal strippings: 4.457-72; 4.473-504; 11.368-83; 11.575-91; 17.288-300.
[27] Non-fatal strippings: 11.91-100; 11.101-21; 11.218-47; 11.328-35; 13.640-2; 15.343-5; 15.515-45; 15.572-91; 16.659-65; 17.69; 17.123-5; 17.317-8; 17.540-2; 17.567-81; 21.196-204.

far as to drag an enemy corpse through the fray while fending off the dead man's brother with his sword arm (11.247-63). Indeed, stripping corpses mid-battle seems to be a serious enough problem in Homeric combat that Nestor famously reminds the Greek host that fighting should come before trophy-taking (6.68-71). But if subsequent books of the poem are any indication, his admonition fell upon deaf ears.

The warriors of the *Heike* display similar disregard for both tactical advantage and their own safety in their pursuit of enemy heads, which effectively serve the same function for the Japanese as stripped armor does for the Greeks—minus the inherent material value associated with the armor.[28] One passage of the *Heike* describes the flow of combat and the role of trophy taking rather well:

> Genji against Heike—
> endless sallies and sorties, endless fierce challenges as men roared out
> their names, until the mountains quaked and charging hoofbeats rang out
> like thunder.
> Arrows rained down in volleys and counter volleys.
> Some carried the wounded off on their shoulders;
> some, only lightly wounded, fought on;
> some, mortally struck, lay dying.
> Pairs grappled side by side, fell, stabbed each other to death.
> Here a man pinned another's head down and cut it off;
> there a man's head rolled from his shoulders. (*Heike* 9.12)

This passage itself shows how combat in the *Heike* moves from ranged exchanges of arrows, like the archery contests mentioned above, to vicious close-quarters grappling.[29] Indeed, in spite of their overwhelming reliance on archery, *bushi* are often eager to close with their opponents, and resort to strange fighting methods like grappling from

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[28] A memorable scene in the *Iliad* sees Glaucus and Diomedes, who have just realized that they are guest-friends after hearing one another's genealogies, exchange armor in honor of their ancestral friendship. The poet comments here that Zeus must have addled Glaucus's wits, because he traded his golden panoply worth one hundred oxen for Diomedes's bronze armor worth only nine (*Il.* 6.234-6). There are no instances in the *Heike* in which a direct material value is attached to the head of a slain warrior, although historicall men were rewarded for presenting the head of a high-status enemy to their lord.

[29] For analysis of this sequence of battle in non-*Heike* source material, see Ishii (1965) 117-25.

horseback and the uniquely Japanese technique of pinning an opponent's head against one's saddle horn in order to cut it off (4.11, 4.12, 7.8, 8.8, 9.2, 9.4, 9.6, 9.13, 9.16).

Because *bushi* usually fight from horseback with bows, combat in the *Heike* generally proceeds at a different pace than in the *Iliad* and is not subject to the same dramatic shifts of momentum found in the battles between the spear-wielding Greeks and Trojans. Overall, fighting in the *Heike* is a loosely organized affair in which men ride forward to challenge each other—always with the end goal of taking heads as trophies to enhance their status. This often devolves into a series of single combats between warriors and/or small fights with their followers, in which all the niceties of honor and propriety commonly associated with Japanese warriors are ignored in the pursuit of status through head-taking.[30]

The fight between Taira no Tadanori and Okabe Tadazumi after the Battle of Ichi-no-Tani illustrates this process well. Okabe challenges Tadanori when he sees the latter falling back from the front line of the battle, and he quickly rides up and manages to pull Tadanori off his horse (9.14). In reprisal Tadanori stabs Okabe three times, with the third blow penetrating Okabe's helmet but failing to kill him. Just as Tadanori is winding up to decapitate Okabe, however, Okabe's page rides up and cuts off Tadanori's arm at the elbow, to which the defeated Tadanori responds by chanting the name of Amida Buddha while Okabe (somehow still alive) takes his head.

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[30] Much of this can be attributed to the fact that many of the finer elements of Japanese warrior etiquette probably did not develop until much later. Yet there are several instances in the *Heike* when warriors are praised for their loyalty to a lord or respect for an opponent (*Heike* 5.11, 7.20, 9.5, 11.11). Butler argues that even these are suspicious, however, because most examples of loyalty and other exemplary warrior behavior can be traced back to the Kamakura text, which was compiled between 1300 and 1340 and used to form the Kakuichi version in 1371 (Butler [1969] 93-108). It is probably safe to assume, then, that, much like in Homer, there is a sharp divide between ideals and reality with regard to warrior behavior.

A similar episode, also from Ichi-no-Tani, sees Taira no Moritoshi and Inomata Noritsuna grappling on horseback before they fall to the ground (9.13). Moritoshi manages to overpower Noritsuna, but Noritsuna convinces Moritoshi to spare him in exchange for safe passage from the battle, which the Taira have by now lost decisively. When Moritoshi relents and rests for a moment, Noritsuna takes advantage of his distraction by shoving him into a nearby rice paddy, jumping on top of him, and brutally stabbing him under the skirts of his armor. After decapitating Moritoshi, Noritsuna leaps up triumphantly with head in hand and shouts to his allies that he has taken the head of a Taira commander.

Bushi will not only place themselves in great danger to take enemy heads, but they will go to equal lengths to avenge fallen comrades or to retrieve their bodies and thereby prevent their heads from being taken. At Ichi-no-Tani, Hirayama Sueshige, who charged the gates of the Taira fortress right behind Kumagai Naozane (9.10), rides into the fort solely to take the head of the man who had shot his standard-bearer, braving the fire of several dozen Taira archers for the sake of revenge and status (9.10). Later at the Battle of Yashima, Taira no Noritsune jumps swiftly across several adjacent boats in order to prevent the Minamoto from taking the head of his page, Kikuō, who was himself slain while attempting to take the head of an enemy Noritsune had just killed (11.3).

Because heads have no inherent material value in the Japanese warrior culture of the *Heike*, the status they convey upon the men who take them is relatively intangible, and warriors in the tale are recognized for the enemies whose heads they have taken when they present them to their commanders at the close of a battle in a head-viewing

ceremony, called *kubi-jikken* ("head examination").[31] The purpose of these grim

spectacles is not only to intimidate a victorious lord's potential challengers, but also to

record dutifully the names of the heads' former owners and of the warriors who took them

(8.11, 9.18).[32] Indeed, apart from providing protection and backup for their master, one

of the main tasks of a warrior's entourage is to take heads from enemies their master has

killed and transport them to the rear of their lines for later tallying and viewing (9.2, 9.11,

11.3).

Similar to the other forms of battlefield competition discussed earlier, trophy-

taking is another excellent example of a highly visual way of signaling participation in

combat. But trophy-taking is also something of a perversion of effective fighting: while

it is perfectly understandable for a warrior to wish for proof of his victory over a worthy

opponent, it is also easy to see from the examples above how a battlefield trophy can

transform from a simple token of participation to the main objective of a fight. This no

doubt unintended high-jacking of the manner of fighting among the Greeks and Japanese

in the tales is likely an echo of the real-world warrior culture of the period when those

tales were composed, and it is not too great of a stretch to imagine that warfare in these

times was characterized by relatively small numbers of status-conscious men fighting

primarily over status-enhancing trophies. These particular elements of Greek and

Japanese warrior culture and their shaping of the manner in which warriors fought thus

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[31] Futaki (1982) 178-80 speculates that head-taking and *kubi-jikken* might have originated earlier in the Heian period (794-1185 CE) out of a need to identify the dead accurately—Heian aristocrats habitually layered themselves with makeup, and their heads could often only be identified after thorough cleaning and examination.
[32] This process was also seen historically: see Ishii (1965) 117-25; Varley (1994) 27; Conlan (2003) 21.

were to exercise a profound influence on subsequent fighting methods in both cultures,

which would have ramifications for several centuries thereafter.

II.5: The Historical Evolution of Combat

Several historical sources, including contemporary artwork from the 12th and

13th centuries CE, show the importance of head-taking in Japanese warrior culture.

Picture scrolls depict heads on display in *kubi-jikken* ceremonies, complete with scribes

on hand to assess the value of prizes that were awarded in historical Japan for fallen

warriors' heads in accordance with their status,[33] determined by the examination of a tag

attached to each head that identified its owner and his killer.[34] Several military manuals

and other *monogatari* also confirm that this form of reward-based combat was

occasionally problematic, since warriors would sometimes disengage from combat after

taking a head they deemed would convey sufficient prestige,[35] and others would creep

around the battlefield at night to take the unclaimed heads of the corpses left there—a

practice pervasive enough that some manuals provide helpful hints on how to identify a

head that has been removed from a fresh corpse rather than collected belatedly.[36]

Eventually, head-taking during combat became so disruptive to battlefield order that

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[33] *Genpei jōsuiki* 20.489; *Go-sannen kassen ekotoba* ("Later Three Years War Picture Scroll") 15.102-3; *Teijō zakki* ("Gift Presentation Memorandum") 4.229-30.
[34] *Hippu zukai* ("Uncultured Illustrated Diagrams"), a 17th-century military manual, discusses the proper protocols for filling out a head tag and even provides pictures instructing the reader to attach tags to the hair on the left side of the head or, in the case of shaven-headed warrior monks, to the left ear (3.29-30; see fig. 3). The examination procedure is discussed in Futaki (1999) 59-63.
[35] Conlan (2003) 22-3.
[36] *Teijō zakki* 3.318; Conlan (2003) 21-4.

commanders actively began to discourage the practice,[37] although it persisted well into

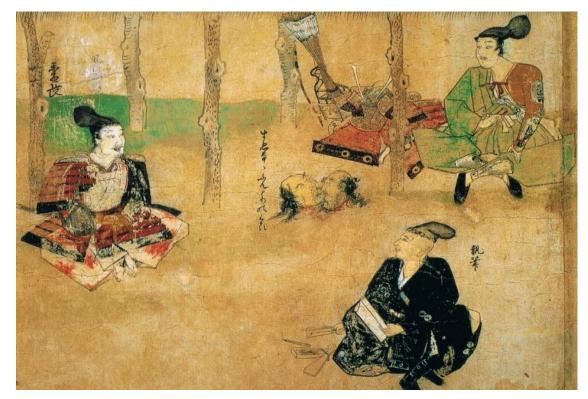the 16th and early 17th centuries at least as an after-battle ritual.[38]

Figure 1: Heads under inspection (*Mōko shūrai ekotoba* ["Mongol Invasion Picture Scroll"] 2.40). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

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[37] Conlan (2003) 21; Friday (2004) 155.

[38] Multiple records from later in the medieval period tell of head-taking and *kubi-jikken* ceremonies. *Shinchō kōki* ("Reliable Leader's Public Record") has many examples from the campaigns of Oda Nobunaga, Japan's most bloodthirsty warlord (Ōta [2011] 1.24), and, just as in the *Heike* (*Heike* 11.18, 12.1), notable warriors were being executed in Kyoto at Rokujō-gawara and their heads hung from trees by the Sanjō bridge as late as 1600 (Fujii [1979] 501-2; Ikushima [1994] 130-51). *Hippu zukai* features several illustrations of head-carrying bags and other paraphernalia associated with transporting and presenting heads (3.29-31, 7.9; see fig. 4), along with instructions for the proper presentation of a head to one's lord and what knot to tie in order to attach a severed head to one's saddle (3.28, 7.8; see fig. 5). As the scale of battles and the number of slain warriors grew larger, samurai would also take ears or noses as substitutes for heads: *Hippu zukai* provides illustrated examples of where to cut in order to remove these body parts, specifying that mustaches should remain attached to noses, and that the left ear should be cut off with the hair at the temple still attached (3.60; see fig. 6).

Figure 2: A head is presented to a daimyō (*Hippu zukai* 3). Permission granted by L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

Figure 3: Tags attached to heads for identification; the lower head is that of a warrior monk, as indicated by its fully shaved hair (*Hippu zukai* 3). Permission granted by L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

Figure 4: Specialized bags for transporting severed heads of particular value (*Hippu zukai* 7). Permission granted by L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.
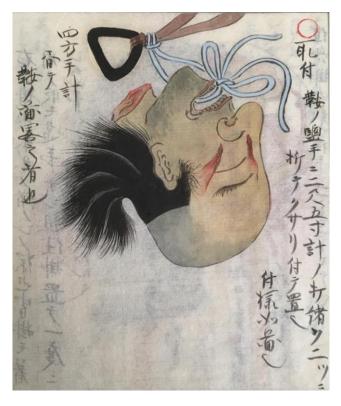

Figure 5: Special knot for affixing a severed head to one's stirrup (*Hippu zukai* 7). Permission granted by L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

Figure 6: Instructions for removing noses and ears when head-taking is not feasible (*Hippu zukai* 3). Permission granted by L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

But it is puzzling that head-taking was considered the ideal form of killing among a group of aristocratic horse archers, an oddity displayed well by the frequent shifts in the *Heike*'s combat scenes from arrow exchanges to frenzied close-quarters grappling, stabbing, and decapitating. One obvious explanation for this mixed fighting in the tale is the broad range it allows for exciting literary descriptions, but this does little to explain the connection between the literary world of the *Heike* and the historical one of its warrior audience. While historically grounded depictions and descriptions of archery abound, historical parallels for the *Heike*'s scenes of mêlée combat are much more difficult to come by, and, as such, it seems likely that the tale places far too much emphasis on hand-to-hand fighting.[39]

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[39] Scholars have wrangled for decades over the role of close-range fighting in 12th- and 13th-century Japanese combat. Some have speculated that the *Heike*'s many scenes of grappling and mêlée combat are

Nevertheless, the *Heike* was popular among warriors living not long after the

Genpei War,[40] and so likely reflects to some degree the reality of historical Japanese

fighting. Although the interplay between mounted archery and mêlée in historical

combat might have been clumsy, it is most likely that, contrary to the dynamic shifts

between ranged and close-quarters fighting seen in the *Heike*, medieval Japanese warriors

began their battles with archery exchanges and only moved to sword fighting and

grappling when they had expended all their arrows[41]—a manner of fighting also seen in

less-refined war tales such as the *Hōgen monogatari* (*Hōgen* 2.1-2). This supports the

idea that mêlée combat was less frequent, as do analyses of wound statistics—one of the

newest scholarly trends—taken from 14th-century records: in three separate analyses of

different batches of documents, no more than 25 percent of injuries were caused by

swords, spears, or *naginata* (a halberd-like weapon), while nearly all others came from

arrows.[42] These points are, however, mere symptoms of the Japanese preference for

archery over mêlée. The true cause of this predilection, as well as for the enduring

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indicative of a historical shift during the Genpei War to close-range fighting (Ishii [1965] 117-25; Satō [1972] 194-5; Amino [1974] 372-3). More recently, others have argued to the contrary that different tactical innovations such as siege warfare somehow unseated mounted archery from its position of prominence, but that mêlée combat remained relatively infrequent (Kondō [1993]; Okada [1993]; Abe [1994] 204-11; Imai [1995]; Futaki [1999] 40-66; Kawai [1999]).

[40] The main surge in the *Heike*'s popularity was greatly aided by the affection several Ashikaga shogun had for the tale, and several earlier variant manuscripts of the tale that emphasize heroic battle scenes suggest that these versions of the *Heike* were developed by oral singers who traveled with armies and accompanied warriors into battle (see Chapter 1).

[41] Kondō (1997) 187-97; Friday (2004) 132.

[42] Although its data is drawn from a little more than a century after the Genpei War, Conlan's statistical study shows that arrow wounds were common—73 percent of all identifiable wounds were caused by arrows. Yet arrow-inflicted deaths only occurred after a warrior had taken many hits—sometimes more than twenty—and mortality rates declined through the course of the 14th century as *bushi* continued to prefer the use of bows against such effective armor (Conlan [2003] 57-9). Similar studies have also found that arrow wounds account for the majority of reported battlefield injuries: Shakadō (1992) found that 82 percent of wounds were dealt by arrows, and Suzuki (2000) around 87 percent, although the two examined far fewer documents between them than Conlan.   Because military technology appears to have changed little in the course of this period—most significant changes to Japanese armor and tactics occurred between the 15th and 17th centuries—there is probably little danger in assuming that these figures are similar to those we might find in the 12th and 13th centuries.

popularity of head-taking, was, like so many other aspects of military culture found in Greek and Japanese society and their respective epics, competition.

The competitive value of head-taking is almost immediately apparent. The severed head of a fallen enemy is a powerfully visceral and visual indicator of a warrior's prowess, and the existence of *kubi-jikken* designed to rank enemy heads against one another and reward their captors accordingly is a strong indicator of the enduring popularity of competitive head-taking in Japanese military culture. Archery, however, offered a more peculiar and multifaceted form of competition for medieval *bushi* that seems largely to have been shaped by the heavy lamellar armor worn by combatants. This armor, called *ōyoroi* ("great armor"), was designed not only to deflect missiles with its hundreds of small, overlapping plates (*sane*) of metal or leather, but also to catch them in the silk or leather lacing that held those plates together.[43] Perhaps coincidentally, the cuirass's plated segments also protected against the long, slender slashing swords used almost exclusively by warriors of the period,[44] thus providing *bushi* with ample defense against most of the weapons wielded by their opponents. These protective qualities of *ōyoroi* were also combined with the relative weakness of 12th- and 13th-century bows, which lacked the power to penetrate lamellar armor reliably. Warriors could thus only shoot effectively at a range of about ten meters or less—a distance from which they could feasibly target the gaps in an opponent's armor around the armpits, neck, and legs.[45]

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[43] For the development of *ōyoroi* armor, see Sasama (1981) 34-42; Suzuki (1984); Kondō (1998), (2000) 44-9. Conlan (2003) 48-82 and Friday (2004) 64-94 each give general overviews of the equipment used in the 14th and 13th centuries, respectively.

[44] Friday (2004) 84; on the preference for bows over swords, see Kondō (1995) 212-46. Kondō also argues that swords would not only have been generally ineffective against *ōyoroi*, but also that they would have been quite difficult for an armored man to use from horseback, Kondō (1993) 60-74, (2000) 257-65.

[45] Fujimoto (1990) 70; Kawai (1996) 41-3; Kondō (1997) 119-21; Friday (2004) 107.

While *bushi* developed a dizzying array of special arrows for cutting lacing or piercing vulnerable spots in *ōyoroi*,[46] the armor still proved a resilient bulwark against missiles.

Figure 7: Several types of arrowheads (*yajiri*) made for cutting, striking, or penetrating armor and flesh alike. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Mêlée combat was also likely avoided because it would have been quite difficult for a mounted, *ōyoroi*-clad warrior to fight at close range: a suit of the armor weighed as much as 65 pounds—a considerable burden that, unlike the full-body plate armor of similar weight found in medieval Europe, did not distribute its load evenly across the wearer's body.[47] With much of the armor's weight bearing down upon the wearer's neck, shoulders, and waist, fighting with any kind of weapon would have been more difficult, and mounting and dismounting in the dynamic manner of the *Heike*'s grappling scenes very challenging indeed. As such, the use of *ōyoroi* made both ranged and mêlée combat more difficult, and the competitive value of archery was further augmented by the interplay between this armor specifically developed to defend against arrows and bows that could only kill with difficulty, since all the warriors fighting with this equipment would have understood the significant skill required to execute a fatal shot.

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[46] *Hōgen monogatari* offers several descriptions of these special arrows, which are 18 handbreadths in length and fitted with halberd-shaped heads, being used by Minamoto no Tametomo (*Hōgen* 1.10, 2.1).
[47] Sasama (1981) 101; Fujimoto (2000) 43-52; Kondō (2000) 207; Friday (2004) 94. While much of the armor's burden would have been borne by horse and saddle for mounted warriors, Japanese horses even in the 14th century were quite small—about half the weight and three-quarters the height of modern thoroughbreds—and probably would have been unable to carry a fully armored warrior at a gallop (Conlan [2003] 20-1; Friday [2004] 97).

In light of these historical aspects of Japanese arms and armor and the *Heike* passages featuring archery discussed above, we begin to see the competitive aspect of Japanese mounted archery, with its focus on skilled shooting from horseback, at work. But there was also an incentive for warriors to be shot at. Passages in *Heike* and *Hōgen* portray warriors counting arrow dents in their armor and vying with one another to "take an arrow" from famous opponents (*Hōgen* 2.1), and the 14th-century records mentioned above show that it typically took many arrows to kill an armored man.[48] Like the warriors of the *monogatari*, then, historical *bushi* probably also sought glory by getting shot with many arrows—a task made much more possible and visible for the *ōyoroi*-wearer by his armor's reliable tendency to catch arrows between its plates and lacing. When a shooter did succeed in killing his foe, the glory of the accomplishment would then have been signified by the severed head of his enemy*,* an impressive trophy in the early days of this competitive style of mounted archery given the multi-layered challenge of killing a foe with an arrow, riding up to his body, dismounting, decapitating him, and returning to one's allies unscathed. While decapitations in the *Heike* are frequently the result of mêlée fighting, this is, as noted above, likely an exaggeration, since historical warriors seem to have been much more hesitant to engage in close-quarters fighting because of these other difficulties.[49]

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[48] See n. 42.
[49] Conlan (2003) 77; Friday (2004) 131-3.

Figure 8: "Last Stand of the Kusunoki at Shijō-Nawate" by Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

In conditions like these, it might seem that Japanese warfare in the 12th and 13th centuries should have been ripe for military innovations of some sort that might have broken the supremacy of well-armored horse archers. Such changes would indeed come, but not for several more centuries: even as conflicts increased in number and intensified in severity during the fighting of the 14th century, casualty rates actually dropped thanks to the continued reliance of *bushi* on archery and the relative effectiveness of *ōyoroi* at blocking arrows.[50] While the inefficiency of this arrangement was likely tolerable earlier in the medieval period when small bands of *bushi* fought in loosely tied groups and confederations,[51] the primacy of archery seems to have broken down gradually as larger numbers of men equipped for mêlée combat took to the battlefields of later eras—an effect illustrated well by a quick glance at the numbers involved in some of the decisive conflicts of the 12th, 15th, and 17th centuries. During the Genpei War, for example, the combined forces of the Minamoto and Taira at Ichi-no-Tani in 1184 probably numbered

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[50] Conlan (2003) 57.
[51] Ishii (1985) 1-14.

around 10,000 men,[52] the majority of whom were *bushi*, many of them mounted.

Similarly, *Jōkyūki*, the tale of the short-lived Jōkyū War of 1221, puts the full number of

Emperor Go-Toba's forces in that conflict at 19,326 (*Jōkyūki* 2.1). In contrast, it was not

uncommon for battles of the Ōnin War of 1467-77 to feature forces of 50,000 or more.[53]

By the late 16th and early 17th centuries, armies had grown even larger: Toyotomi

Hideyoshi's first invasion of Korea in 1592 involved 158,000 men,[54] and the Battle of

Sekigahara in 1600 saw nearly 200,000 soldiers take the field. Commensurate with this

increase in troops was a decline in mounted archery and a greater emphasis placed on

close-range fighting between larger bodies of men.[55]

In light of the competitive value of archery among *bushi*, however, this seems a

rather odd development—for if large numbers of mêlée troops meant the demise of this

elite competition, why would elite warriors have led these larger contingents in the first

place? To begin with, by the time of the Genpei War the heads of confederations of

bushi like the Minamoto and Taira were practically indistinguishable from the

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[52] Scholars concur that numbers given in the *Heike* and other *monogatari* are probably exaggerated, sometimes by as much as ten times (Shinoda [1960] 63; Mass [1974a] 61; Farris [1992] 300-1). The figure given here is a generally agreed-upon estimate meant to account for this tendency, since the *Heike* gives no concrete numbers for the forces deployed at Ichi-no-Tani.

[53] It should not surprise that the majority of these new combatants were much more poorly equipped than the higher-ranking and wealthier warriors for whom they fought. Their armor was lighter, less protective, and less expensive than *ōyoroi*, which could be difficult to obtain even for the rich: Conlan (2003) 89-92 explains that armor was so expensive that it was frequently the subject of inheritance disputes, and that most warriors had to rely on the largess of their lords or take on significant debt in order to secure an adequate suit of armor. Friday (2004) 94, 181 n. 91 estimates that a full suit of *ōyoroi* would have taken well over a year's worth of work to construct, and would have cost many times the monthly wages of a common laborer.

[54] Even by this time, full armor was expensive and relatively rare. *Iriki bunsho* ("Iriki Documents") states that of the 15,000 men taken to Korea in 1592 by the Shimazu clan, those carrying banners "should be armored," and that "distinguished" mounted men should have armor whenever possible (150-A).

[55] The shift from ranged to mêlée combat was also a by-product of lords using larger numbers of more poorly equipped men, who would have fought on foot and been armed chiefly with spears (*yari*), bows, and, later, matchlock firearms—all of which were cheaper to produce and generally required less training to use effectively than the fancier bows and swords favored by elite, mounted *bushi*. *Iriki bunsho*, for example, records that of the 15,000 men of the Shimazu's Korean contingent, 1,500 were armed with guns, 1,500 with bows, and the remaining 12,000 with spears (150-A).

bureaucrats of the imperial court, and they directed their forces in battles and campaigns from a distance. Nowhere in the *Heike*, for example, do Taira no Kiyomori or Minamoto no Yoritomo actually take to the field; both are instead content to send their children, siblings, or other kinsmen to oversee battles and troop movements, and this behavior is followed by many of the commanders and shogun of subsequent centuries. But as these men moved away from competitive mounted archery, they seem instead to have devoted themselves to the study of strategy and tactics, of which the Japanese already possessed a fine and ancient tradition of Chinese origin that dated as far back as the 7th century CE, when the Japanese court sought to model its military after the peasant infantry army of the Tang dynasty.[56]

So it is that by the 16th century we see texts like *Kōyō gunkan*, a chronicle in which its author Kōsaka Masanobu recounts the military policies and philosophies of his lord, Takeda Shingen, who was heavily influenced by Sun Tzu's treatise *The Art of War* (*Sun Tzu* in Chinese). Shingen was also a paragon of the strategically focused form of competition practiced by later elite warriors, his rivalry with the warlord Uesugi Kenshin the stuff of legend: between 1553 and 1564, the two fought five battles on and around the plain of Kawanakajima, outmaneuvering one another so frequently that none of the engagements was decisive. For men like these, who traded their saddles and bows for camp stools and war fans, the value of head-taking lay in its ability to motivate lesser warriors to fight—their own competition was instead concerned with who could best direct his troops, who controlled the most territory, and who had amassed the greatest wealth with which to attract retainers.[57] Such wealth was often used to reward warriors

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[56] Friday (1992) 8-11
[57] Friday (2001) 21-35; Kawai (2017) 318-21.

for heads taken in battle, and likely was used to attract the larger groups of foot soldiers responsible for the swelling ranks of these later centuries.

Low-ranking warriors' desire to take the heads of notable *bushi* in exchange for rewards might have even sped the demise of mounted archery once foot soldiers began to appear in larger numbers: in earlier periods, mounted archers routinely dominated infantry, and the only instances when mounted warriors were consistently defeated by infantry in the 14th century—before the great surge of foot soldiers seen in the Ōnin War a century later—were those in which the cavalry's mobility had been compromised.[58] As more infantry took to the battlefield, their numbers not only would have made it harder for mounted *bushi* to maneuver around them, but also would have reduced the impact of skilled archery, which was not intended to kill opponents en masse. Moreover, large contingents of infantry would have made mounted *bushi* more likely to engage in close-quarters combat, for which bulky *ōyoroi* was notably unsuited.[59] So long as there were few enough men on the field for mounted archers to pick off these hopeful decapitators, mounted archery would have remained a viable option for the elite. But larger bodies of spear-wielding troops—themselves eager to take the heads of elite warriors[60]—would have mitigated the advantages of mounted *bushi* even further, making it less practical to fight as a mounted archer in proportion to the number of infantry engaged in battle.[61]

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[58] Conlan (2003) 72.

[59] Conlan (2008), (2010) 124-58.

[60] Although more men—and, therefore, more heads—were involved in the battles of this later period, only the heads of higher-ranking men were considered valuable. The heads of low-ranking warriors were discarded (*Genpei jōsuiki* 37.917), and taking the head of an unidentified or low-ranking man came to be considered "no different from taking the head of a dog or bird" (*Genpei jōsuiki* 37.926; Conlan [2003] 21 nn. 35-6).

[61] Morillo (1995) 75-106; Conlan (2003) 71-2, (2008), (2010) 124-58; Kawai (2017) 320-1.

As army compositions shifted over the centuries to accommodate the growing strategic ambitions of provincial lords, so too, then, did the relationship between mounted archery and head-taking. While the two might have had a common origin and existed in harmony for several centuries,[62] eventually the motivating power of the one outweighed the honorific importance of the other. While lower-ranking *bushi* might have lost the ability to compete effectively with each other in mounted archery thanks to this influx of foot soldiers, they still could have won honor and glory through heads taken in battle, an incentive that no doubt would also have appealed to lesser warriors as well. The most salient point we can take away from the evolution of medieval Japanese warfare, then, is that head-taking remained a constant driver of warrior competition throughout the four-hundred-year period in which warlords wrestled for control of the country. A similar development, complete with its chiefly material incentives, can also be seen in ancient Greece in the centuries after the circulation of the Homeric epics.

The fighting methods of the Greeks in many of the earlier centuries of antiquity have long been a source of bewilderment to scholars. Given the Greek peninsula's rocky, mountainous terrain and the relative isolation of the people in its different regions, many have speculated how the Greeks of the Mycenaean era or Iron Age might have used chariots and masses of infantry like those found in Homer, or whether Homer even understood how chariots were used.[63] Several also have wondered, like Mardonius before them (Hdt. 7.9β.1), why the Greeks of the Archaic and Classical periods gradually came to rely upon a dense formation of heavy infantry like the phalanx that required level

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[62] See n. 31.
[63] See Greenhalgh (1973) 7-17; Latacz (1977) 215-23; Pritchett (1980) 3.187 n. 120; Kirk (1985) 360-3; Singor (1991) 112-8; van Wees (2004) 157-60.

ground—a rarity in craggy Greece—to fight.[64] Of course, there has been much debate

over whether the fighting found in the *Iliad* can be considered an authentic representation

of *any* period, for the poet curiously interweaves chariots, archers, spear-throwers and

thrusters, and both loose and tightly packed heavy infantry together in his chaotic battle

scenes.[65] With all these disparate methods of fighting in play, often simultaneously, in

the narrative,[66] the only real consistent and decisive manner in which Homeric warriors

do battle—apart from the relatively rare duels that serve as significant narrative turning

points[67]—is in the intense fighting that breaks out around the corpses of fallen warriors.

As pointed out above, these struggles are invariably concerned with and decided by the

possession of a fallen warrior's body and armor, which bears a strong similarity to the

medieval Japanese preoccupation with head-taking.

Armor-stripping in historical Greece is somewhat more difficult to track than

head-taking among the Japanese. Only the Homeric poems place much consistent

emphasis on the practice, while later authors mention it only rarely, if at all, and typically

only in passing. Moreover, there are no depictions of armor-stripping in ancient art, and,

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[64] See Grundy (1911) 245-9; Greenhalgh (1973); Cartledge (1977); Hanson (1991); Sekunda (1994); Ober (1996); van Wees (2000); Lendon (2005).

[65] See Latacz (1977); Pritchett (1985) 7-33; van Wees (1994a), (1996), (1997); Hellmann (2000); Lendon (2005).

[66] Van Wees has argued that most of Homeric combat is consistently fought in open formation with significant space between the two opposing sides ([1988] 1-14; [1994] 1-9). This is contrary to the traditional position that only a handful of heroes do the majority of the fighting (see more recently Ducrey [1985]; Murray [1993]), as well as to the notion that close formations are the norm (see Latacz [1977]; Pritchett [1985] 7-33). I tend to agree with van Wees's assessment, since most of the fighting in the *Iliad* does seem to conform to the open-order combat he describes so well. But I would insist that the most decisive moments in these battles occur in the furious close-order fighting on which I focus here, and that these more intense conflicts might have contributed to the development of later Greek tactics, whereas open formation combat largely disappeared.

[67] Single combat, while decisive in the few instances where it appears in the *Iliad*, does not appear to have been popular among the ancient Greeks—only two single combats are attested in the Classical period (van Wees [2004] 286-7, n. 11). This unpopularity can likely be attributed to classical Greeks' preference for group-oriented hoplite warfare, but the scarcity of dueling in the *Iliad*, especially considering Homeric heroes' love of competition and glory, might also be indicative of a long-standing distaste for the practice that dated back well into the Iron Age.

quite unlike the Japanese, who kept lists of heads' previous owners and of the warriors

who had taken them, the Greeks do not appear to have had similar battlefield records for

the equipment seized by individuals. Instead, some of our best sources for historical

armor-stripping are the archaeological remains of storehouses and the treasure lists of

temples and shrines from across the ancient Greek world, which show that these religious

sites were replete with armor and weapons that had been dedicated to the gods.[68] If these

records are any indication, the temples and stoas of many ancient city-states were

festooned with weapons and suits of armor either taken from defeated enemies or

dedicated by their victorious owners after a successful battle.[69] Armor taken from enemy

corpses was also used to erect battlefield trophies for commemorating victories, although

the equipment used typically would have represented only a tiny fraction of that taken

from fallen enemies.[70]

　　　The first literary instances of dedication and trophy erection occur in the *Iliad*,

and although the poem frequently describes the lengths to which its warriors will go to

strip the armor from corpses, the poet rarely tells us what they actually do with these

spoils. As it turns out, the few descriptions we have are of dedications. Before his duel

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[68] Pritchett (1979) treats at some length both dedications of armor (240-76) and other uses of captured arms (277-95). Of particular interest are several tables listing the provenance, dedicant's name, and associated dates for many items from the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (290-1). For dedications, see also Jackson (1991) 228-49; Snodgrass (2013) 87-88.

[69] Polybius, for example, recounts that the stoas of Aetolian Thermum looted by Philip V in 218 BCE were lined with 15,000 shields (5.8.9). Lehmann (1953) reasoned that a stoa at Samothrace was built for the storage and exhibition of votive offerings (6), and also found pieces of armor and a spear fragment in the same area ([1962] 93). La Torre (2011) 67-104 examines archaeological evidence for dedications of weapons and armor in 42 sanctuaries of Archaic Sicily and Magna Graecia. See also Coulton (1976); Pritchett (1979) 293-5; Jarva (1995); Storch (1998).

[70] Pritchett (1974) 246-9 also examined trophies and summarized the arguments of other scholars on the subject, mostly with respect to the origins of the battlefield trophy and its possibly religious connotations. The most comprehensive bibliography on the topic remains that of Janssen (1957). On the first literary signs of battlefield trophy erection and its ties to hoplite combat, see Krentz (2002) 30-3; for possible archaeological remains, Wallace (1969) 293-303; on other customs and issues, Beister (1973) 65-84.

with Ajax, Hector vows to hang the Greek's massive armor in the temple of Apollo if he wins (*Il.* 7.83), and Odysseus suspends the equipment so treacherously taken from Dolon's corpse—after it had already been hung on a tamarisk bush for a short time as a makeshift trophy (10.465-8)—on the prow of his ship until he can make a proper offering of it to Athena Leïtis (10.570).[71] In Book 13, Idomeneus also mentions a collection of twenty spears and a horde of shields, helmets, and corselets taken from Trojans he has killed, which he keeps in his tent as a sort of trophy display, although he does not seem to have dedicated them to any god (13.260-5).

Literary sources after the Homeric poems are mostly silent on armor-stripping, dedication, and battlefield trophies until well into the 5th century BCE, with the slight exception of the fragmentary 7th-century poems of Tyrtaeus. Although perhaps most often discussed for its possible depiction of the early hoplite phalanx,[72] Tyrtaeus's poetry might also allude to corpse-stripping: one fragment in particular depicts an older man dying in front of his comrades, whom Tyrtaeus describes as naked (*chroa gumnōthenta*) and holding his mangled genitals (Tyrtaeus 10.21-7 = Lycurg., *Leoc.* 107.21-7). In light of how much emphasis Tyrtaeus places on the armor worn by men on the front line in his other poems (Tyrtaeus 11.23-38, 12.23-6 = Stob., *Flor.* 4.9.16, 4.10.6), it is odd that a man dying among them would be naked. In the same fragment, however, Tyrtaeus calls light-armed fighters *gumnētes* (Tyrtaeus 11.35), so it might be that the naked old man is one of them. But Tyrtaeus might also be using *gumnoō* to mean 'deprived of defenses'— its meaning in some combat scenes of Homer (*Il.* 16.312)—so it could also be possible

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[71] See Stagakis (1987) 55-71.

[72] Pritchett (1985) 37-40 discusses Tyrtaeus's depiction of warfare and collects the literature for the many debates over the text of his poems; other major works treating Tyrtaeus's possible depiction of the hoplite phalanx include Lorimer (1947) and Latacz (1977).

that the old man is a front-line fighter (*promachos*) who was wounded and stripped of his armor. This interpretation also pairs well with Tyrtaeus's admonitions to other heavy-armed men to protect their comrades, which echo those of warriors in the *Iliad* who call to their friends to fight over the bodies (and armor) of fallen allies and enemies.

Several centuries after Tyrtaeus, historians of the 5th century began to describe armor-stripping, dedication, and trophies more reliably. Herodotus is, unfortunately, not among them, since he never actually uses the word *tropaion* ("trophy"), and stripping and dedications are rarely mentioned in his work. Although a battlefield trophy does figure prominently in later versions of the tale of the legendary Battle of Thyrea, where 300 champions of the Spartans and Argives fought in the mid-6th century, Herodotus's account of the battle makes no mention of the lone Spartan survivor erecting a trophy from stripped Argive arms (Hdt. 1.82),[73] so the trophy in the story is likely the addition of a later historian, Thyrea having been a popular topic among Hellenistic authors and epigrammatists.[74] While Herodotus's account of the Battle of Thyrea may not contain any references to trophies, it does describe how the Spartan survivor Orthryades stripped the Argive dead of their armor and hauled it back to the abandoned Spartan camp (1.82.5), which indicates that armor-stripping was at least still in practice earlier in the 5th century.

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[73] Similarly, Herodotus mentions how the Greeks at Plataea killed the Persian cavalry commander Masistius and took possession of his body, even describing how Masistius's armor was so durable that only a blade to the eye could kill him (Hdt. 9.22-5). But Herodotus does not say that the Greeks stripped Masistius's corpse; instead, it is Pausanias who lists Masistius's breastplate among the ancient dedications housed in the temple of Athena Polias at Athens (Paus. 1.27.1).

[74] Pritchett (1974) 249-50 discusses the controversy and includes references to Hellenistic authors and inscriptions. See also van Wees (2004) 133-4, 287 nn. 11-12. Lendon (2005) 399 gives bibliography for recent and older scholarship.

Beginning with Thucydides, who memorably describes an impressive heap of arms stripped from over a thousand Ambraciot corpses (Thuc. 3.112-13), historians suddenly mention large numbers of trophies—Thucydides himself describes 58 of them, Xenophon 30, and Pausanias 20.[75] Thus, while depictions of armor-stripping do not frequently appear in later sources, the dedication of arms and erection of trophies, often direct results of stripping, are attested in great abundance. Because of these later attestations of dedication, then, we can assume with some confidence that armor-stripping and dedication were continually practiced from as early as the Iron Age—practices depicted, albeit somewhat exaggeratedly, in the Homeric poems—into the 3rd century BCE: the inventory from the temple of Athena at Lindos, for example, lists items purportedly dating back to the Trojan War, and others are from well into the Hellenistic period.[76] Armor-stripping, although not always attested, was thus inextricably tied to dedication, and both seem to have been attendants of Greek combat from their earliest literary depictions in Homer, then in the 7th-century poems of Tyrtaeus, and finally in the literary sources of the 5th century beginning with Herodotus, other historians, and the tragedians.[77]

Perhaps the key distinction between the armor-stripping depicted in Homer and Tyrtaeus and that seen in 5th-century sources is that the later sources only describe corpses being stripped following a battle's conclusion, whereas the mid-battle stripping so frequently depicted in Homer and mentioned in Tyrtaeus makes it seem as if corpse-

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[75] Pritchett (1974) 264-9 provides tables of every attested instance of battlefield trophies in Thucydides, Xenophon, the Oxyrhynchus Historian, and Diodorus, covering the years 434 through 299/8 BCE.
[76] Blinkenberg (1941) 2B, 162-70.
[77] For occurrences in tragedy, see Aesch., *Sept*. 278, *Ag*. 579; Soph., *Aj*. 92; Eur., *Andr*. 1123, *Bacch*. 1214, *Heracl*. 695 *Phoen*. 1474-5, *Tro*. 576 (gathered by Pritchett [1979] 278).

stripping in combat is relatively commonplace. What we have here, then, is a situation

similar to that of the Japanese discussed above: a competitive element of warrior culture

(armor-stripping) serves as a focal point of combat in early depictions of Greek fighting

and occurs frequently during battles, but gradually becomes an after-battle ritual. The

cause of this shift in the Greek case seems to have been increased numbers like the

Japanese, except that emphasis was placed on heavily armored infantry who fought in

masses, a fighting style used to a limited degree in the Iron Age and increasingly more

frequently moving into the Archaic period.

Evidence for fighting in the Iron Age is, like much else, incredibly sparse. Earlier

evidence from the Mycenaean period makes it seem likely that the Greeks of the Bronze

Age fought with chariots,[78] heavy infantry,[79] and light infantry[80] in a way somewhat

similar to that seen in the *Iliad*,[81] and probably on a much larger scale than anything seen

in the Iron Age. It does not seem implausible that the tactics used in earlier, more

prosperous times endured from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, albeit at a much smaller

and more poorly equipped level. Chariots still figure in Geometric pottery, particularly in

military contexts,[82] and the 10th-century burial of four horses (an ideal size for a chariot

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[78] Driessen (1995) 481-98; Palaima (1999) 367-78.

[79] Snodgrass (1964) 39-41 lists archaeological finds of shields or shield components, discusses different types of shields (41-61), and gives similar treatment to Bronze Age body armor (71-6). For body armor, see also Åstrom (1977).

[80] It is readily apparent from the massive walls around Bronze Age structures at Mycenae, Tiryns, and Athens, as well as from the impressive system of fortifications, dams, and canals found at Gla, that Mycenaean rulers were capable of commanding considerable labor forces (Iakovidis [1998] 197-204, 275-8). It stands to reason, then, that those rulers could also have rallied large numbers of these laborers to fight as archers or slingers in times of war, much as later Greeks would do with poorer citizens and slaves (van Wees [2004] 61-5, 166-72). Pritchett (1991) 1-67 has a sizeable discussion of slingers and stone throwers throughout Greek antiquity.

[81] Linear B tablets from the palaces at Khania, Knossos, Pylos, and Tiryns list the masses of military materials accumulated and distributed by their rulers, among them chariots, bronze armor, arrows, and bronze mêlée weapons (Palaima [1999] 367-78). For outlines of Mycenaean military organization and possible tactics, see Lejeune (1972) 57-77; Palmer (1977) 35-62.

[82] See Snodgrass (1964) 159-63; Ahlberg (1971) 12-25.

team, if Homer is to be believed [*Il.* 8.185, 15.680, 23.171])[83] with a cremated warrior in

the so-called *heroön* at Lefkandi might be an indication that Iron Age rulers sought to

maintain chariots and teams of horses,[84] possibly for use in battle as in the *Iliad*.[85]

Although of much later date than the Lefkandi burial, an impressive bronze panoply

uncovered at Argos dating to the latter part of the 8th century could also suggest that

heavy armor, while undoubtedly expensive and difficult to obtain for most warriors, still

played a role in Iron Age combat.[86] If anything, the rarity of heavy armor in the

archaeological record might speak to its value in Iron Age society and in combat: as in

the *Iliad*, suits of metal armor would likely not have been buried with the dead but

instead would have seen continued use by living warriors because of their expense and

rarity, and the armor of those killed in battle would have been extremely valuable spoils

over which men would have fought keenly.

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[83] There is some debate over whether the four-horse combat chariot was known or in use when the Homeric poems were first composed. See Kirk (1990) 312.

[84] Crouwel (1992) 29-30, 52-4. For Lefkandi more generally, see Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett (1982) 169-73; Popham, Calligas, and Sackett (1990); Lemos (2006) 505-30.

[85] Chariots are used most often in Homer for transportation and harassment, allowing their owners to pursue enemies at great speeds and also to carry about wounded men and arms stripped from the dead (*Il.* 5.217-38, 11.264-83, 11.357-67, 11.531-7, 13.535-9, 14.402-32, 17.130-4, 17.538-42). The role of chariots in Homeric combat has long been a controversial topic, with the majority of scholars derisively viewing chariots as simple taxis that transport men to and from the battlefield (see n. 57 for bibliography). Van Wees, one of the few to deviate from this idea, believes Homer's description of chariots to be plausible save for the idea of them running over dead bodies or fighting in formation, since they probably belonged to wealthy leaders who would have ridden at the head of their respective contingents ([1994] 9-14). I agree with this stance, since chariots seem to fit quite well into the open-order fighting that characterizes the skirmish-like portions of Homeric battles, allowing prominent fighters to use hit-and-run tactics or to pursue foes fleeing from densely packed fights gone-wrong with much greater speed than those on foot. There are, for example, several segments of the *Iliad* that feature chariot fighting. The brothers Phegeus and Idaeus throw spears at Diomedes from their chariot in the densest part of the battle (5.8-26), and later Nestor drives Diomedes's chariot so Diomedes can throw a spear at Hector, which, predictably, kills his charioteer instead (8.115-29). The Trojan Asius also leads his men from the front in a chariot as they attack the Greek camp (12.110-40). Moreover, the poet never says that Patroclus has dismounted before killing Sarpedon (16.462-72), similar to an earlier killing spree of his in which he runs over many enemy corpses with his chariot and begins slaughtering Trojans without any mention of his having dismounted (16.378-418). After Patroclus's death, it is said that Automedon was accustomed to ride about the Trojan ranks in his chariot killing enemies, but that without a driver he cannot handle both the reins and a weapon at the same time (17.459-65).

[86] Courbin (1957) 322-86.

Thus, the most significant changes seen in Iron Age combat were likely the decline of chariot use, the scarcity of heavy armor, and a significantly reduced number of combatants. This probably means that much of the fighting in the Iron Age was done by light infantry wielding javelins, bows, slings, and throwing stones—equipment that would have been much easier and cheaper to produce and maintain than chariots or heavy armor, but also much less likely to be attested archaeologically.[87] Nevertheless, what appear to be light infantry are depicted with some frequency on the Geometric pottery of the Iron Age,[88] and artwork of the late Iron Age and early Archaic period also shows archers and slingers fighting in concert with shield-bearing heavy infantry.[89]

This image of Iron Age combat actually matches fairly well with what we see first in the Homeric poems and then in Tyrtaeus. Although the poet of the *Iliad* focuses almost exclusively on warriors clad in full panoplies of bronze armor, light infantry are still involved in several of the poem's battles. The Catalog of Ships in Book 2 mentions that the 350 Methonians who came to Troy, originally led by the archer Philoctetes, are armed with bows (2.716-28), and later in Book 13 Oïlean Ajax's Locrians are armed with bows and slings and do not wear armor (13.714-8), instead fighting from behind the cover provided by armored warriors in front of them (13.719-22). The presence of such warriors on the battlefields of the *Iliad* might at first come as a surprise, but, if anything, their participation makes a good deal of sense given Homeric fighters' preference for

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[87] Bows and arrows were made mostly of perishable materials, their few metal components now difficult to find unless they were deposited in a grave, and sling stones are nearly impossible to identify thanks to their ubiquity—only specially cast lead shot from later periods is easily recognized as sling ammunition. For examples see Snodgrass (1964) 141-56, 167; Pritchett (1991) 39-52. Javelins are also difficult to identify clearly, since heavy infantry, even in the early days of the hoplite phalanx, probably carried multiple throwing spears not much different from those used by light infantry (van Wees [2000] 147-9, 294 n. 4).
[88] Ahlberg (1971) 44-5.
[89] Ahlberg (1971) 12-25, 48-54.

missile weapons and the several passages in the poem that mention arrows and stones being used in great numbers (3.77-83, 12.156-61, 277-89, 15.314-7, 16.772-5).[90]

Tyrtaeus's poetic descriptions of battle contain a substantial number of heavy infantry with large shields, who stand in a relatively close-packed mass and fight with swords and thrusting spears; unarmored light infantry take cover behind the shields of this armored front while throwing javelins and rocks at the enemy (Tyrtaeus 10-12). Callinus, another mid-7th century poet and a contemporary of Tyrtaeus, also mentions shield-bearing men fighting with spears, as well as javelins being thrown in abundance (Callinus 1.1-5 = Stob. 4.10.12).[91] This evidence, considered together with the Homeric scenes discussed above that depict massed infantry fighting, suggests that heavily armored warriors fought in concert with large numbers of unarmored light infantry.[92]

But what was the need for all these heavy-armed warriors? While the light-infantry-style tactics seen in the battles of the *Iliad* seem to have been effective, they are most naturally countered by dense formations of heavy infantry. It has, of course, been argued that the *Iliad* contains several depictions of the phalanx, and these descriptions of shield being pressed against shield, helmet against helmet, and man against man seem like excellent demonstrations of how many suppose hoplite battles would have been fought (*Il.* 4.446-9, 8.60-5, 11.592-5, 13.128-35, 13.480-95, 16.212-7, 22.4).[93] While

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[90] Also, while it is well-established that warriors like Teucer or Pandarus, both skilled archers, typically use bows exclusively in combat, the Trojan Helenus uses a large Thracian sword and a bow in rapid succession to dispatch Deïpyrus and then to fire an arrow at Menelaus (13.576-600), suggesting that even armored warriors might have used ranged weapons at some point—something sometimes seen on Geometric pottery as well (Ahlberg [1971] 30 fig. 32, 45).

[91] Latacz (1977) also argues that the poetry of Callinus and Tyrtaeus depict the same style of combat found in the *Iliad*.

[92] See n. 22 for examples of unarmored men in the *Iliad*.

[93] Snodgrass (2013) 85-94, who remains skeptical of this position, gives a helpful (and recent) overview of the scholarship with brief bibliography. Pritchett (1985) 7-33, for the most part a supporter, provides a more in-depth, albeit older, accounting of the literature. For those in favor: Latacz (1977); Kirk (1990) 21-

Homeric warriors are certainly not fighting in the ordered ranks of the hoplite phalanx,
shield walls—the phalanx's most basic feature and best defense against missiles—appear
at least eight separate times in Books 11 through 17 of the *Iliad* (11.592-5, 12.105-6,
13.128-35, 480-95, 719-21, 15.566-7, 17.266-73, 342-59).

  Several passages describe the effectiveness of the shield walls in warding off
attackers and their projectiles. In the thick of the fighting of Book 17, for example, a
sequence of reciprocal spear thrusts and throws is halted abruptly when the Paeonian
leader Asteropaeus attempts to charge the Greeks in reprisal for his recently struck
comrade Apisaon, but cannot because the Greeks have arrayed themselves in a
formidable shield wall around Patroclus's body (17.342-55). Ajax keeps this formation
intact by commanding the Achaeans neither to give ground nor to fight ahead of the main
force, but to "stand firm close beside the corpse and do battle hand to hand" (17.359); the
poet then comments that more Trojans died in the ensuing struggle because the Greeks
"always took thought in the throng to ward off sheer destruction from one another"
(17.364-5). Another passage in Book 13 sees the Greeks being organized into a tight-
packed mass by the Ajaxes in order to resist a Trojan sally into the Greek camp, which
they seem to repel successfully:

> For there the best [of the Greeks] stood fast against the Trojans and noble Hector,
> locking spear with spear, shield with shield at the base.
> So round shield leaned on round shield, helmet on helmet, and man on man;
> and the horse-hair crests along the ridges of their shining helms touched
> as they nodded, so dense were they set next to one another.
> And the spears shaking from their bold hands formed
> a doubled line; their thoughts were focused straight ahead, and they were eager to
> fight. The Trojans pressed upon them in throngs, and raging Hector
> led them straight forward . . .

2; Ulf (1990) 139-49; Hanson (1991) 80-1; Raaflaub (1991) 225-30; Edwards (1991) 329-30; Janko (1992)
60-117. Against: Lorimer (1947) 76-138; Bowden (1993) 45-63; Singor (1991) 17-62; van Wees (1986)
285-303, (1988) 1-24, (1994b) 131-55, and (2004) 249-252.

> But when he fell upon the dense phalanxes
> he stood pressing right on them, and the sons of the Achaeans arrayed
> against him stabbing with swords and two-edged spears
> pushed him away, and he fell back, staggering. (*Il.* 13.128-37, 145-8)

Remaining passages that mention shield walls offer little detail about the formations involved or how the warriors in them are fighting, but they do use common language to describe the Greeks or Trojans forming fences with their shields, first to attack the Greeks (12.106), then to defend the ships from the Trojans (15.566-7), and finally to protect Patroclus's body (17.266-73).[94]

An interesting feature found in some of these passages is the spontaneity with which the shield walls are sometimes assembled, usually at the behest of a hero. In one instance, Eurypylus calls to the other Achaeans for help when he is shot through the thigh by one of Paris's arrows, and they come "and [stand] close beside him, leaning their shields against their shoulders with spears outstretched" (11.592-4). Later on, Idomeneus beckons to his comrades to fight with him against Aeneas over Alcathous's body, and they come "having one heart in their breasts and [standing] close by one another, leaning their shields against their shoulders" (13.487-8). Aeneas in turn calls to his own allies, who gather around him and drive against the Greek formation: "these then rushed on in close combat with long spears around Alcathous, and the bronze about their chests clanged horribly as they tried to hit one another in the throng" (13.496-8). Not only, then, do Homeric warriors form into these masses in order to defend bodies or to halt an enemy advance, but also to fight against masses made by the opposing side.

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[94] 12.106 uses the word *arariskō* ('to fit together') to describe the Trojan shield wall, whereas 15.566 and 17.268 use variants of *phrassō* ('to fence, secure, protect').

In fairness, there are some passages where the poet of the *Iliad* will describe warriors arrayed in shield walls at the beginning of a battle only for them to begin throwing spears in the combat that follows (4.450, 8.86, 14.361-402, 16.212-7), the typical way that warriors fight when in loose formation. There are several possible explanations for this discrepancy. First, each of the cited passages that feature ranged combat after a description of this phalanx-like formation follows the prescribed order of battle outlined earlier: warriors will fight until enough men on one side are slain, after which they will fall back, usually incurring more losses in their retreat. Thus, the fighting depicted in Books 4-7 is effectively an extended Trojan retreat that is only halted by the duel between Ajax and Hector in Book 7, whereas Book 8 outlines a gradual Greek retreat that ends at nightfall. Book 14 depicts Poseidon himself rallying and arraying the Greeks to push back the Trojans, and Book 16 the rapid retreat of the Trojans as they are driven to Troy by Patroclus and the Myrmidons.

Another factor worth remembering is that the poet centers his descriptions around a relatively small cast of Greek and Trojan heroes, and we need not interpret their actions at any given point in a battle as representative of the Greek and Trojan armies as a whole. While heroes in these passages are throwing spears at one another, their armored followers might also be fighting in a close-packed mass in front of them.[95] Also, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is quite likely that poets continued to add to the *Iliad* through most of the Archaic period, so these descriptions of phalanx-like formations might simply

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[95] The poet's description of light infantry fighting in Book 13 might be indicative of how the Greeks understood this to work, since Oïlean Ajax's unarmored Locrians are said to fight behind the front line: "those in front with their elaborate war gear fought against the Trojans and bronze-armored Hector, and those behind were shooting from cover" (13.719-21). A passage from Book 14, in which Poseidon himself commands the Greeks to arm the bravest men with helmets, the best shields, and the longest spears so they can stand at the front of the host and allow others to fight from behind them (14.361-82), might also be instructive.

be later insertions that describe the way battles were fought as many as several centuries after the poem's inception—their incongruence with the lines that follow after are the result of the overall fixity of the text and the interpolating poets' inability to adjust existing lines to fit their additions.

Whatever the case, the warriors of the *Iliad* were in the habit of clustering around fallen warriors in order to seize the armor of their dead enemies or to prevent that of their allies from being taken. As shown above, the *Iliad* depicts these actions as being motivated by a powerful competitive drive, and, thanks to the highly materialistic nature of Homeric *timē* ("honor"), it also betrays the pragmatic side of armor-stripping, which was probably a dominant concern in the historical fighting of the Iron Age. This clustering likely proved highly effective at protecting bodies and the valuable armor in which they were clad, and this effectiveness might have provided incentive for early Greek leaders to arm as many of the men in their small retinues with heavy armor as possible in order to create larger, stronger masses of heavy infantry. As these masses increased in size, the emphasis of combat shifted from mixed groups of heavy and light infantry fighting in cooperation to almost exclusively heavy infantry, and at some point in this move toward mêlée combat stripping corpses in battle was no longer possible and became an after-battle ritual. But even though the practice of armor-stripping changed, the desire for armor trophies remained—this was likely responsible for the hoplite emphasis on holding ground, which originally developed to protect the armored dead, but over time became a competitive excellence in itself. This competition to hold ground quite naturally created a similar emphasis on forcing an enemy mass away from the area

where bodies and armor lay, from which arose the singular Greek habit of massed

pushing, the *othismos*.[96]

Conclusion

  We thus have seen that the *Iliad* and *Heike* both depict societies in which

competition is a prime mover of warriors' actions on the battlefield. The ways in which

ancient Greek and medieval Japanese warriors compete, although different in form, were

still quite similar in purpose, and the foremost method of competition that brought with it

a reliable increase in status in both societies was the taking of trophies from defeated

enemies. The practices of armor-stripping and head-taking depicted in the tales are also

attested with some frequency by historical sources, and their prevalence seems to have

combined with the overriding importance of status and competition to Greek and

Japanese warriors to affect the manner in which combat evolved over time in both

societies. While the historical evidence for this evolution only exists in bits and pieces,

the similar change in medieval Japanese warfare is much better attested and easier to

trace. Given the similarities between the competitive warrior cultures displayed in the

Iliad and *Heike* and the historical shifts from scattered ranged combat to mêlée fighting

among the Greeks and Japanese discussed in this chapter, then, it seems quite likely that

trophy-taking exercised a profound influence on the way warriors from these two

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[96] The nature of hoplite combat and the existence of the *othismos* have been subject to much debate, with scholars being divided between the "orthodox" view that hoplite combat was fundamentally centered around massed pushing or the "heretical" position that it was not. For summary of the debate and bibliography, see Wheeler (2008) 186-223; Kagan and Viggiano (2013) 1-56; Millender (2016) 162-94. For those in favor of massed pushing: Holladay (1982) 94-7; Krentz (1985) 50-61; Lazenby (1991) 87-109; Luginbill (1994) 51-61; Hanson (2000); Pittman (2007) 64-76; Schwartz (2009). For those against: Lorimer (1947) 76-138; Cawkwell (1989) 375-89; Goldsworthy (1997) 1-26; van Wees (2004); Matthew (2012); Millender (2016) 162-194. Rawlings (2007) 93-7 and Lendon (2010) 307-13 feebly attempt to find some sort of middle ground between the two camps.

seemingly disparate cultures fought. This influence in turn provides compelling

explanations for the evolution of stripping and dedication of armor among the ancient

Greeks, as well as for the genesis of the hoplite phalanx.

CHAPTER III: WARRIOR CULTURE AND THE DECLINE OF CENTRAL AUTHORITY

The historical period depicted in the *Heike* represents one of the final phases in Japan's centuries-long transition from an earlier, state-funded conscript army to a privatized system that slowly expanded the opportunities and, eventually, the political power of provincial *bushi*. The battle for supreme control of the country between the Taira and Minamoto represents the culmination of this process and displays the weakness of imperial authority in the face of private warrior power. This in turn bears a marked resemblance to a similar weakness of central authority in the Homeric poems, in which Agamemnon, Priam, and other rulers must motivate their followers and allies with generous grants of booty and other favors to maintain their loyalty.

Such gifts forge a link between the traditional forms of authority and warrior culture found among both peoples, but they also reveal the compromised nature of that authority, and their importance in both tales forecasts the eclipse of these traditional positions' power. Although the imperial house and its courtiers as well as Agamemnon and Priam justify their authority with common ideological appeals like descent from gods or eminent founders, we see several times in both tales that followers' loyalty is weak and fleeting. The process depicted in the *Heike* and seen in medieval Japan by which warriors eventually break down imperial power is thus potentially instructive for historians of Bronze Age Greece (1600-1100 BCE), for similar conflicts of authority are found in the *Iliad* and can perhaps be deduced from the archaeological record of the Mycenaean world as well. The links between medieval Japan and Bronze Age Greece, separated as they are by vast differences of time and culture, consist, as shown in

Chapters 1 and 2, of the similarity of the *Iliad* and *Heike* and of the competitive cultures found in both tales and attested historically in both regions. The way in which these cultures seem to have altered their respective military and political climates is sufficiently similar that, by looking at the way political and military leaders exercise their authority in the *Heike*, we might be able to learn something about the historical accuracy of the leadership culture portrayed in the Homeric poems, how that culture affected leaders' ability to exercise their authority, and how the earlier attenuation of this authority might have plunged the grand kingdoms of the Mycenaeans so suddenly into chaos and darkness.

III.1: Authority in Theory

There seem to be two primary avenues by which supreme rulers in the *Iliad* and *Heike* claim legitimacy for their authority. The first is through descent, the other by appeal to some form of divine sanction or support for their reign. Because so many Homeric heroes claim descent from Zeus or other deities and the majority of *bushi* in the *Heike* can follow the branches of their family tree back to the imperial family, who were believed to have been descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, these two arguments for legitimacy are often intertwined. We will therefore examine them in unison as well.

In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon is supposed to be the grandson of Pelops, who was highly favored by the gods and given rule over the peninsula that would bear his name (Hom., *Il.* 2.101-8).[1] On this basis, Agamemnon and several of the Greek leaders assert

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[1] Apollodorus relates how Pelops married Hippodamia and got his kingdom (*Epit*. 3-16), as well as what happened to his descendants; Pindar tells the whole story of Pelops's life, albeit in a rather strange order (*Ol*. 1). While none of this information is mentioned explicitly in the Homeric poems, the poet does seem to assume prior knowledge on the part of his audience when offhandedly mentioning Agamemnon's ancestors, Pelops and Atreus, which he does with some frequency.

that he has been given special authority by Zeus to command other Greek rulers. During

the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, for example, Nestor reminds Achilles that

he should defer to Agamemnon because of the latter's higher status and larger dominion,

which belong to him because of the extra portion of honor granted him by Zeus (1.277-

81).[2] Both Nestor and Odysseus echo these sentiments when they remind Agamemnon of

his special, Zeus-given command, first before sending the embassy to Achilles in Book 9

and later during the Trojan attack on the Greek camp in Book 14 (9.97-9, 14.85-7). But

perhaps the most vivid symbol of Agamemnon's divinely supported rule is the scepter

that features so prominently in his council with the Greek army in Book 2. Although it is

Odysseus who primarily wields the scepter after receiving it from Agamemnon for a

time, the poet goes into some detail about its history and the line of kings from which

Agamemnon is descended:

> And up stood lord Agamemnon
> holding the scepter that Hephaestus wrought with toil.
> Hephaestus gave it to lord Zeus, the son of Cronos,
> and then Zeus gave it to the messenger, Argeiphontes [=Hermes];
> lord Hermes gave it to Pelops, driver of horses,
> then Pelops in turn gave it to Atreus, shepherd of men;
> but Atreus after his death left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks,
> and Thyestes in turn left it for Agamemnon to bear,
> to be lord over many islands and all Argos.   (*Il*. 2.100-8)

The pedigree of this scepter very effectively links Agamemnon and his family to the

Olympians, implying that Pelops and his successors were given kingly authority by the

favor of the gods.[3]

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[2] "Wish not to quarrel with a king face to face, son of Peleus, since not alike is the portion of honor of a scepter-bearing king, to whom Zeus gives glory. But come now! you are mighty and a goddess mother bore you, yet he is better, since he is lord over more." Mondi (1980) 203-16 believes the divine associations with Homeric kingship are a Mycenaean holdover.

[3] For a more detailed discussion of the uses of the scepter and its other appearances in the Homeric epics, see Griffin (1980) 9-12; Mondi (1980) 203-16; Easterling (1989) 104-21; van Wees (1992) 276-80; Lowenstam (1993) 60-85; Nagy (1999) 179-80.

Authority is founded on similar principles elsewhere in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, with rulers such as Priam and Odysseus relying on descent and (sometimes loose) ties to Olympus to support their authority. As a descendant of Dardanus, Priam is five generations removed from Zeus, but most of his authority seems to derive from his great-grandfather Tros, the founder of Troy. Priam's claim to the throne is shown to be somewhat complicated, however, by the apparent rivalry between him and the house of Anchises, Priam's cousin, as Aeneas, Anchises's son, seems resentful of Priam and Hector, and in one instance even stands at the outmost edge of the Trojan force so as not to fight on their behalf (13.458-61). This aspect of Trojan authority reveals well the limits of Priam's rule, since the Trojans' relationships with their allies are founded more on ties of friendship and tribute rather than upon Priam's authority or oaths of fealty to him. In this way, Troy itself functions much more like a single, large house than as a city or nation—Priam's impressive number of progeny doing little to disabuse one of this notion—where Priam essentially functions as patriarchal leader, thus strengthening the notion that his authority is founded on descent.[4]

Odysseus's family also appear to base their right to rule on lineage. Telemachus mentions that each generation of his family has had only one son, but only traces his line back to his great-grandfather Arcesius (*Od.* 16.117-20), which scholiasts interpreted on the basis of mythology to mean that Arcesius was a son of Zeus.[5] Whether or not this was the case, Odysseus's family were considered kings of the Cephallenians (*Il.* 2.631-7; *Od.* 16.122-5), whose name is supposed to have come from Cephalus, another possible

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[4] For Trojan politics and the nature of Priam's leadership, see n. 13.
[5] Dindorf (1962) 16.118. Ovid also says Arcesius was Zeus's son (*Met.* 13.144-5).

candidate for Arcesius's father.[6] As such, we have attributed to Odysseus's family a loose

possible tie to Zeus and several generations of rule over a geographic region, and it is on

these premises that Telemachus is the nominal heir of Odysseus's throne and that the

other leaders of Ithaca and the Cephallenian islands grant that, in theory, they should be

at least minimally deferential to him, despite their actual behavior.[7]

In the *Heike* as well as in historical Japan, the emperor was said to be descended

from the sun goddess Amaterasu (*Heike* 11.12), who sent her grandson Ninigi no Mikoto

down to earth to cultivate rice; it is his great-grandson, Jimmu, who is held to have

founded the imperial house in 660 BCE.[8] The Minamoto and Taira clans were both

descended from the historical imperial family (10.1),[9] and derived much of their prestige

from this connection, as well as their later claims to regency. As a sign of their descent

from the sun goddess, the Japanese imperial family possessed three treasured heirlooms

said to have been given by Amaterasu to Ninigi no Mikoto before his descent to earth: the

sword Kusanagi, the Yata mirror, and the Yasakani jewel. Much like Agamemnon's

scepter in the *Iliad*, these objects function as symbols of divine authority in the *Heike*,

and they likewise are given extensive backstories in the tale—an entire chapter of Book

11 is devoted to Kusanagi and the story of how the blade was found by the god Susano-o

in the tail of the eight-headed serpent Orochi (11.12),[10] and another chapter in the same

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[6] Arist. *Fr*. 8.44.504; Hyg., *Fab*. 189.

[7] On Odysseus's family and their authority, see Finley (1978) 74-107; Qviller (1981) 109-55; Halverson (1986) 119-28; Whitley (1991) 348-9.

[8] *Nihon shoki*, finished in the early 8th century CE, is one of the earliest written sources for this story and explains it in detail in Books 2-3.

[9] See n. 4 of the Introduction.

[10] Tyler notes in his translation that because the imperial sword was held in such reverence, 11.12 of the *Heike* was a secret piece taught to only the finest disciples of the *biwa hōshi* guild (Tyler [2012] 620, n. 269). This chapter comes not long after the conclusion of the decisive Battle of Dan-no-Ura, in which the Taira are practically annihilated and the imperial sword sinks to the bottom of the sea with Emperor Antoku and his grandmother, Lady Nii (*Heike* 11.9). 11.12 reveals the considerable anxiety that arose after the

book gives a less comprehensive background for the mirror as well (11.14). The powers ascribed to the imperial regalia are ill-defined, but briefly displayed in the *Heike* when a group of Minamoto retainers recovers the chest containing the mirror in the aftermath of Dan-no-Ura. After breaking the chain that secured the chest's lid, they manage to pry it open only slightly before their vision fails and blood begins pouring from their noses, whereupon a nearby Taira warns them that commoners cannot look upon the mirror without suffering such ill effects (11.10).

Other portions of the *Heike* also speak to the importance of the imperial regalia—with their implications of divine descent—for providing political authority. A part of the *Heike*'s political narrative focuses on Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's concern about the Taira clan's possession of the regalia, which the Taira took with them when they fled the capital in Book 7 (7.13). After the rebellious Kiso no Yoshinaka is driven from the capital and defeated by Minamoto no Yoritomo's younger brothers, Noriyori and Yoshitsune, Go-Shirakawa grants them an imperial edict permitting them to fight the Taira only under the condition that they return the regalia to him (9.7). When the spoils from the Battle of Ichi-no-Tani yield none of the regalia, however, Go-Shirakawa writes to the Taira and demands the treasures in exchange for the recently imprisoned Shigehira, one of Kiyomori's three remaining sons (10.3). Although Shigehira's mother, Lady Nii, urges this exchange, Munemori, her other son and now head of the Taira clan, refuses it, since the Taira still insist that the young Antoku is the legitimate emperor and that "only

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sword's loss: legions of divers were sent to retrieve it, and many believed that it would simply reappear in time because of its divine power. A court doctor of yin-yang astrology also speculated that Orochi, "in token of his eight heads and tails," assumed the form of the 80th emperor in his eighth year (Antoku) and took the sword back into the sea to the realm of the Dragon God, Ryūjin (11.12). The questionable existence of Orochi notwithstanding, this theory is problematic for several reasons, the most important of which are that Antoku was the 81st emperor, and his father, Emperor Takakura, had been dead since 1180, as well as that the boy was only six at the time of Dan-no-Ura.

the regalia confer sovereignty" on him (10.4). Following this refusal, Shigehira is handed

over to the monks at Nara, which he had burned after the Battle of Uji in 1180 and where

he is later executed in the *Heike*'s final book. Finally, at the conclusion of the Battle of

Dan-no-Ura, Go-Shirakawa receives word of the Taira's defeat and sends an imperial

official to Yoshitsune not to learn the fate of his grandson, Antoku, but rather to find out

if the regalia have been recovered and when they will be returned to the capital (11.11).[11]

III.2: Authority in Practice

Practical authority in the *Iliad* and *Heike* functions quite differently from the

ideals outlined above, and many examples demonstrate in detail the various ways in

which traditional authority in the *Iliad* and *Heike* has been degraded by the competitive

warrior cultures of both societies. Valuing skill in battle, material rewards, and status-

bearing trophies above all else, these cultures seem to have clashed strongly with

traditional forms of authority. Thus, leaders generally have limited power to command

those beneath them, and often must resort to bribery, persuasion, or threats of violence to

get their subordinates to act according to their desires.

This weakness is displayed nowhere better than in Agamemnon's various

interactions with those whom he is supposed to be commanding in the Trojan War. As

the head of the Greek force and wealthiest of the Greek rulers, Agamemnon claims to be

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[11] While the religious ramifications of the imperial family losing the regalia would indeed have been dire—as the descendants of Amaterasu, the emperors of the imperial house were the de facto heads of Japanese religious life—other cultural elements that were likely inherited from the Chinese imperial system, after which the Japanese court was modeled, seem to have caused concern as well. Chinese emperors were thought to have had influence over the natural world: famine, drought, severe flooding, and other natural disasters were considered sure signs that an emperor had lost his divine right to rule, referred to as the Mandate of Heaven. Because of its claims to divine ancestry, the Japanese court did not explicitly adopt the Mandate of Heaven in its several borrowings of Chinese laws and policies, but it does seem to have had similar ties to the natural world, even if those ties functioned differently. Piggott (1997) writes extensively on the subject of Chinese influence on the development of Japanese kingship.

more kingly and more deserving of *timē* ("honor") than the others (*Il*. 1.277-81, 9.157-61), but his efforts to enforce this ideal are met with surprising resistance, particularly from Achilles. Much has been said of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles,[12] but the most salient features of their arguments for this study center around the conflict between Agamemnon's claims to superior authority and the competitive warrior culture, highlighted in Chapter II, in which Achilles stands supreme. In Achilles's own mind and in those of most of the Greek host, he is deserving of the title "best of the Achaeans": he personally sacked twenty-three cities earlier on in the war (9.328-30), and his martial prowess is nearly unquestioned by Greek and Trojan alike (2.769). It is from this position of martial authority that Achilles seems to feel justified in criticizing Agamemnon's apparent lack of valor, and he accuses Agamemnon of having the "heart of a deer" (1.225), being too fearful to arm himself for battle or to join his men in ambushes (1.226-8), and preferring to take the rightly won spoils of other men instead of fighting for them himself (1.229-31). Such criticisms are not limited to Achilles alone, either— Diomedes, speaking in the assembly of Greek leaders in Book 9, reprimands Agamemnon for suggesting that the Greeks return home and claims that, while Zeus has given him kingly authority, the god "did not give [him] courage, which is the greatest strength" (9.39).

That Achilles and Diomedes are both able to disparage Agamemnon's fighting skills openly without reprisal is strong evidence of the relative fragility of Agamemnon's

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[12] Analyses of the quarrel tend to fall into one of two camps, one focused on its political ramifications, and the other on examining the significance of the language and structure of Achilles's and Agamemnon's exchanges. For the former, see Hammer (2002) 80-92; Barker (2004) 92-120, (2009) 40-88; Elmer (2013) 65-84. For the latter, which is outside the scope of this chapter, Stein (2016) 448-9, nn. 2, 4 collects the literature.

authority, of which there are several other such indications throughout the *Iliad*.
Although Achilles does eventually yield to Agamemnon by allowing him to take away
Briseis, he does so not out of respect for Agamemnon's authority, but for that of the gods.
In fact, Achilles, paragon of the competitive, violent, and touchy warrior culture of the
Homeric epics, is initially intent on killing Agamemnon in response to his threat, and is
even in the process of drawing his sword when Athena grabs him by the hair and
commands him to yield, promising that he will later receive great rewards if he does so
(1.188-214). It does not speak well for the health of a system of government if the only
thing preventing a warrior from murdering his leader is divine intervention.

Other Greek warriors, moreover, need to be swayed by Agamemnon's and
Nestor's (speaking on Agamemnon's behalf) promises of booty and special treatment. In
Book 4, Agamemnon makes his way through the Greek ranks in order to inspire the men
before battle is joined, reminding Idomeneus, Odysseus, and Menestheus of the largess
he has shown them in the past in the form of free food and drink at feasts (4.257-64; 338-
48) and of their reciprocal obligation to fight for him. Later, when Menelaus calls to the
other leaders to aid him in defending Patroclus's corpse, he likewise reminds them that
they are allowed to "drink at the public's cost" (17.250). These privileges seem to serve
as a way to compel service from elite members of the Greek host, as also shown by
Nestor's offering of such privileges—along with a black ewe from every Greek leader
(10.214-16)—to volunteers for the nighttime raid described in Book 10 (10.216-17).

In addition to these instances in the text of rewards being explicitly offered to
warriors for fulfilling fairly basic military duties, we must bear in mind that, as seen in
Chapter II, the most important incentives that draw Greek and Trojan warriors to the field

is the promise of booty and the honor that attends upon despoiled arms and armor. While

no Greek leader tells his men that he will grant them booty himself, it does make sense

that the participants in such a competitive warrior culture would demand a near-constant

supply of fresh opportunities to win spoils and glory. Such a demand is also intimated by

the references made in various parts of the poem to Achilles's and other Greeks' sacking

of cities elsewhere in the Troad (1.366-9, 9.328-30, 11.624-7, 19.56-73, 20.187-98);

indeed, Briseis, Chryseis, and other spoils were taken in these very raids. Since the

emphasis in each reference to raids is on booty taken, it seems likely that the assaults

were envisioned as being carried out not just to keep the Greek host properly

provisioned—especially considering that the poem troubles to mention a robust supply-

line that brought food and wine from Lemnos and Thrace (7.467-75, 9.71-3)—but rather

to furnish the men with booty, the desire for which likely motivated many of them to

come to Troy in the first place.

Although its right to rule does not appear to be questioned as overtly as

Agamemnon's, the house of Priam's actual ability to command is not much better than

that of its Greek counterparts. Priam is the reigning king of Troy and Hector his favored

son and heir,[13] but both must resort to the same tactics of bribery that the Greeks use in

order to motivate their subjects and allies. When the fighting over Patroclus's corpse

intensifies in Book 17, Hector calls out to the leaders of the Pelasgians, Mysians,

Phrygians, and Lycians to remind them that he brought them to Troy to defend his people

and that he has expended most of the Trojans' resources in order to keep them supplied

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[13] Trojan politics have not been explored as deeply as those of the Achaeans. For the former, see Sale
(1994) 5-102; Mackie (1996) 21-6; Barker (2009) 68-74; Elmer (2013) 132-45. For the latter, and Homeric
politics generally, see Donlan (1979) 51-70, (1997) 39-48; Nicolai (1983) 1-27; Hammer (1997) 1-24,
(1998) 1-30, (2002); Wilson (2002); Barker (2004) 92-120, (2009); Elmer (2013).

with food and gifts (17.220-26). Just as with the Greeks, however, these reminders are

not entirely sufficient to spur the men forward to fight for Patroclus's corpse, and Hector

promises to share half the spoils taken from the battle with whichever men manage to

drag off the body and drive back Ajax (17.227-32). After the Trojans have lost the

contest for Patroclus's body in Book 18, Polydamas's suggestion that the Trojan force fall

back within the walls of Troy infuriates Hector, and he complains that the city used to be

known for its riches and splendor, but, again, that most of its treasure has been given to

allies or sold off in order to pay and supply them (18.288-92).

Despite their receipt of such largess, the Trojans' allies appear discontented with

the general progress of the war under the direction of the house of Priam, and criticism is

also frequent within the Trojan ranks. Many among the Trojan force seem displeased at

Priam's decision to defend Paris's abduction of Helen and resent the danger this choice

has brought upon them (3.453-4, 7.390-3). Hector and Helen herself are among Paris's

harshest critics, both of them often wishing that he had died or agreed to return Helen to

the Greeks before the war began (1.56-7, 3.395-7, 428-31, 6.326-31, 521-5, 18.769). But

Hector is also the target of ridicule from the Trojans' allies: Sarpedon first rebukes him

for not fighting better in the poem's initial skirmishes, reminding Hector of the

considerable possessions he (Sarpedon) left behind in Lycia to come and aid the Trojans

(5.470-92). After Sarpedon is killed by Patroclus, Glaucus then criticizes Hector for not

protecting Sarpedon's body from the Greeks, calling him an effeminate coward unworthy

of his reputation as a warrior (17.143) and suggesting that the Lycians will return home

now in light of their leader's death and Hector's inability to defend his corpse (17.144-

68). Each of these rebukes does serve to spur Hector into action, but the criticisms,

combined with the undercurrent of resentment toward Paris, are good indications

nonetheless of the allies' discontent and of Hector's weakening authority among them.

Because of this weakness, Hector must use the same methods for motivating his men as

do Agamemnon and Nestor: in Book 10, for example, Hector offers a chariot and the two

best horses taken from the Achaean camp to whomever will volunteer to spy on the

Greeks (10.299-312).

But unlike the Achaeans at Troy—Odysseus wields Agamemnon's scepter only to

bludgeon the brash Thersites into silence during an assembly of the Greek host (2.265-

8)—Hector also resorts to threats of physical violence to keep his allies on the battlefield.

When he orders the Trojans forward to continue their attack on the Greek camp and

Polydamas suggests to Hector that the Trojans should not proceed because of an

unfavorable omen, Hector threatens to kill him if he convinces any of the Trojans to turn

back (12.211-50), and yells similar threats at the Trojan host later on in the assault, even

saying that he will leave the bodies of whomever he kills for the dogs (15.346-51).

Similar dysfunctions and resorts to violence do occur among the Greeks back home

during peacetime. In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus's actual power on Ithaca, while at least

acknowledged by the fact that he is still alive, is nearly non-existent before his father's

return. In light of the suitors' general disregard of Telemachus's right to rule and their

assumption of Odysseus's death, Odysseus and Telemachus are only able to reassert the

authority of their house by killing them, thus proving their worth in the competitive

warrior culture of the Homeric world and justifying their right to rule—but even this is

not enough, as the suitors' relations gather to avenge them, and the gods must bring the

poem to a hasty close to prevent them from doing so. Moreover, Odysseus never

supposes that he can just return to Ithaca, reveal himself, and use his silver tongue to convince everyone, including the suitors, to fall into line; instead, he assumes from the beginning that he will need to kill the suitors in order to be taken seriously and to reassert his surprisingly fragile kingly authority. In the same way, Nestor's authority at Pylos seems to have been strengthened in his earlier years by a cattle raid he and his father made against the Eleans over a trade dispute (*Il.* 11.670-761), his performance in battle and generous distribution of spoils afterward no doubt endearing him to his followers and increasing their confidence that his leadership would continue to bring them booty. Although both Odysseus's and Nestor's kingly authority in principle rested on lineage— Odysseus's through descent from Zeus and Nestor's from Poseidon (Pind., *Pyth*. 4.136)— both men had to supplement their claims with violence and largess in order to maintain their authority.

Mortal heroes are joined in this behavior by Zeus himself, who threatens violence toward his divine subjects several times throughout the *Iliad*, for even the king of the gods seems to have difficulty ruling the Olympians by his authority alone. Hera is a particularly frequent target of Zeus's threats of physical violence in the poem itself (*Il*. 1.565-8, 8.5-27, 8.442-57), and Zeus also reminds her and the other gods of previous episodes in which he has violently punished them for disobedience to his authority (1.573-94, 15.13-33). All of these threats seem intended to enforce Zeus's position as the most powerful of the gods, and, given the number of times his children and siblings disobey or attempt to sneak around his commands, it appears that this position is far from a secure one. Although Poseidon is careful to avoid openly aiding the Greeks when he rouses them in their most dire hour during the Trojan assault (13.353-7, 14.135-52), Zeus

eventually notices his involvement, and sends Iris to threaten the earth-shaker on his

behalf (15.150-67); Poseidon, however, is unmoved, contending that only Zeus's children

should be afraid of his threats and that Poseidon himself, possessing one of the three

portions of the world divided among him, Zeus, and Hades, is Zeus's equal (15.168-99).[14]

   These examples from the Greek and Trojan camps to Ithaca, Pylos, and even

Olympus suggest the relative fragility of authority in the world of the Homeric poems,

particularly on the larger scale where chiefs are somehow supposed to rule over one

another. As such, leadership in the *Iliad* generally seems to be stronger at the regional

level, that of the individual contingents that make up the two armies: no single figure

among either the Greeks or Trojans leads a whole army, and men usually follow their

respective regional leaders. In the course of arraying the Greek forces in Book 4, for

example, Agamemnon himself says he will not attempt to give orders to the two Ajaxes

and their contingents, leaving them to order their men and fight as they see fit (4.285-7).

Not much later, the poet remarks that as the Greeks marched into battle "each of the

leaders gave orders to his own men" (4.428-9). This attitude toward leadership of

contingents also helps explain why Achilles so easily keeps his men out of combat for

much of the poem, and why Agamemnon, despite being the noblest of the Greek warriors

and the leader of the most men (2.579-80), is not actually able to command the entire

Greek army. Agamemnon can therefore give orders to his own Mycenaean contingent

and Priam and Hector their Trojan subjects, but supreme leaders in the *Iliad* can only

coerce or induce their more lofty followers with promises of increased status and material

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[14] Van Wees (1992) 61-153 notes this behavior among the gods while writing at length on the role of coercive violence in Homeric society. Also see Clay (2006) on Olympian politics more generally in early Greek poetry.

rewards, a condition dictated by the competitive warrior culture found among both the Greeks and Trojans of the Homeric world.

In the *Heike*, authority also seems diminished at all levels of Japanese society. The actual executive power of the imperial family is perhaps the weakest in the tale, but the ability of the Taira and Minamoto to maintain control over their clans and respective governments is similarly troubled. From the very start of the tale, imperial authority is questioned, subverted, and sometimes even ignored. In the days leading up to the rise of the Taira clan, for example, the death of Emperor Toba (Go-Shirakawa's father) results in "a succession of armed skirmishes," from which there arose "repeated executions, banishments, and dismissals from office" (*Heike* 1.7). The singer of the tale suggests that such turmoil was abnormal and had arisen because Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa and his son, Emperor Nijō, were at odds with one another over the extent to which Go-Shirakawa could exercise power from behind the throne (1.7), but also concedes that the Hōgen Rebellion arose from a similar dispute (1.7), so contention of this sort in the imperial family appears to have been matter-of-course. This discordant trend is also borne out well in the *Heike* by Prince Mochihito's rebellion against the Taira in Book 4 (4.3-14), and by Minamoto no Yoritomo's declaration of war against Taira no Kiyomori in Book 5 (5.7-10)—a rebellion that has the backing of several major temples and of Go-Shirakawa himself, who says that the Taira deserve punishment for having "displayed contempt for imperial rule and utter lack of respect for the way of good government," as well as for their supposed desire "to extinguish the authority of the court" (5.10).

Despite Go-Shirakawa's attempts to revive imperial power throughout the tale, from its beginning he and other members of the imperial family are effectively controlled

by the heads of military families. Indeed, in the course of the *Heike*'s narrative, Go-Shirakawa is twice put under house arrest by Kiyomori (3.18, 5.1), and the retired emperor is later forced to flee from the Taira and Kiso no Yoshinaka to seek refuge among the warrior monks of the mountain temples outside Kyoto (7.13, 8.10). At the same time, however, Go-Shirakawa, lacking a state-funded army, is powerless to reassert his authority through military means, and must turn to other warriors to aid him against his oppressors. To attract *bushi* to his side, Go-Shirakawa several times offers grants of land and official titles, such as when he makes Yoshinaka shogun and gives governorships to his sons and associates in return for their aid in expelling the Taira from the capital (8.1-2). But this proves to be a treacherous business, for in the very next book, Go-Shirakawa looks to Yoshinaka's cousins, Yoritomo, Yoshitsune, and Noriyori, to drive Yoshinaka out of Kyoto (9.1-7). The retired emperor then grants similar favors to Yoritomo and his brothers in the hope that they will defeat the Taira (11.1), whose insolence toward the court and possession of the regalia and the child emperor Antoku undermine Go-Shirakawa's authority even further (10.1-4). Any hope that defeat of the Taira will somehow revitalize imperial authority is soon dashed, however, when Go-Shirakawa is drawn into the quarrel between the new shogun Yoritomo and his brother Yoshitsune (12.5-6).

While these episodes in the Genpei War illuminate the weakness of imperial authority, they also reveal the fragile ties that bind warrior clans like the Taira and Minamoto together and how easily loyalties among *bushi* can change when a clan's prospects worsen. Under Kiyomori, the Taira maintain a strong grip on the imperial court, and at one point the clan has direct control of over thirty of Japan's sixty-six

provinces (1.5). After the deaths of Kiyomori and his son, the virtuous Shigemori,

however, the Taira quickly find themselves deprived of skilled leadership, and several

defeats by the Minamoto drive the Taira from the capital and weaken their authority over

provincial allies: in the chapters following the Taira flight from Kyoto, several vassals

from Kyushu abandon their Taira loyalties and forcibly bar the clan from crossing over to

the island (8.2-4), with some citing Go-Shirakawa's endorsement of the Minamoto as

cause for their betrayal (8.3-4). Warrior houses from Shikoku, also previously allied to

the Taira, follow suit some time later (9.6). Even after these betrayals, the Taira ranks

continue to be plagued by defections for the remainder of the Genpei War (10.13), and

the decisive battle of Dan-no-Ura is lost thanks in large part to the untimely betrayal of

the Taira by Awa no Shigeyoshi and Kumano no Tanzō, who take large numbers of

troops with them to the Minamoto side and convince the remaining Taira vassals from

Kyushu and Shikoku to defect as well (11.7-8).

The Minamoto are clearly able to capitalize on the weak loyalties of Taira

followers to great effect, yet their own forces experience little more harmony. The

Genpei War is initially started not by Yoritomo, but by his fourth cousin once removed,

Minamoto no Yorimasa, who visits Prince Mochihito and suggests he rebel against the

Taira (4.3). While the more powerful Yoritomo does not seem unwilling to carry on the

war his relative began, Yoritomo's non-involvement in the Battle of Uji suggests a certain

amount of disunity in the Minamoto clan, which is exposed even further by the later

rivalry between Yoritomo and his cousin, Yoshinaka, who only decides to move against

the Taira when he hears that Yoritomo is preparing to do the same (6.5). That Yoshinaka

is able to take with him a force sizeable enough to defeat the Taira in battle and drive

them from the capital—a task at which Yorimasa had previously failed—reveals the

relative autonomy of the high-ranking members of the clan and their ability to direct large

numbers of followers as they wish with little to no intervention from the clan head.[15]

Yoshinaka has not even reached Kyoto, however, before Yoritomo sends a sizeable force

to intercept and destroy his cousin (7.1), but this effort fails, and Yoritomo grows more

and more annoyed as Yoshinaka wins honors by fighting the Taira, successes that

continue to weaken Yoritomo's hold over the rest of the clan (8.5). In response,

Yoritomo seeks an imperial decree from Go-Shirakawa ordering him to destroy

Yoshinaka,[16] and sends Yoshitsune and Noriyori to carry it out (8.11). Lacking the

manpower to resist his cousins' superior forces, Yoshinaka prepares to make a heroic

final stand against them, lamenting that he could not follow through with his plan to

kidnap Go-Shirakawa, flee to the west, and join the Taira (9.3)! The ramifications of this

sort of infighting in the Minamoto clan and of Yoshinaka's plan to defect to the Taira are

revealing of the difficulty lords face in maintaining the loyalty and obedience of their

great supporters—even if they are related—in the fiercely competitive climate created by

medieval Japanese warrior culture.

  This difficulty is not restricted just to the emperor and the leaders of great *bushi*

houses, however, but seems to affect warriors at nearly all levels in the chain of

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[15] The *Heike* puts Yoshinaka's force at 40,000 (7.6). This is likely an exaggerated figure, but can nonetheless be informative if compared to the similarly inflated 100,000 men sent by Yoritomo to defeat Yoshinaka (7.1), which means that Yoshinaka was capable of drawing off nearly a third of the Minamoto clan's warriors on an expedition in defiance of the clan-head's wishes.

[16] Under the codes of the *ritsuryō* system, an imperial order called *tsuibu kanpu* ("pursuit and capture duty") was required in order for *bushi* to engage in conflicts with more than twenty men—failure to obtain such an order would qualify the ensuing fighting as 'private warfare,' for which there were (in principle) heavy fines and strict punishments prescribed by the imperial government (Friday [1992] 162). For more on private warfare, *tsuibu kanpu*, and a detailed description of the rights granted by these warrants, see Shimomukai (1987) 285-345.

command. Yoritomo's brother Yoshitsune, who is the actual commander of the Minamoto forces in the *Heike*'s second half, seems to have particular difficulty enforcing his authority without resorting to threats of physical violence. When the Minamoto gather at Watanabe and Kanzaki to prepare a naval assault on the Taira fortress at Yashima on Shikoku, Kajiwara Kagetoki recommends to Yoshitsune that they add oars to the bows of their ships to allow them to turn more easily (11.1). Yoshitsune is far from pleased with this suggestion, and when he asks Kajiwara why they should prepare in advance to flee, Kajiwara somewhat mockingly responds: "to my mind a good commander defeats the enemy by advancing when he can, retreating when he must, and staying alive: that is what a good commander means to me. Charging blindly ahead, fighting like a maddened boar: that for me is no good at all" (11.1). Kajiwara's criticism not only seems to strike home with Yoshitsune, but is also persuasive to the crews of the Minamoto ships, who are then hesitant to set sail under Yoshitsune's current plan; in response, Yoshitsune angrily demands they all embark immediately and threatens to shoot any who disobey (11.1). Yet, out of the two hundred boats assembled at Watanabe, only five end up leaving with Yoshitsune—the rest remain behind under Kajiwara's command and cross over to Yashima only after Yoshitsune's small force has defeated the Taira there (11.6). Yoshitsune's and Kajiwara's feud continues soon thereafter at the Battle of Dan-no-Ura, where Yoshitsune denies Kajiwara's request to go first into battle (11.7). In response, Kajiwara announces to bystanders that Yoshitsune "lacks what it takes to be a leader of men," and the two become so angry with each other that they nearly draw their swords, finally agreeing to settle their differences later. But Kajiwara gets the better of this contest later by playing on Yoritomo's paranoia about being

supplanted by Yoshitsune, thus turning the brothers against each other (11.17, 12.4). This eventually results in Yoshitsune's exile and the death of his brother Noriyori, whom Yoritomo executes when he refuses to lead a punitive force against Yoshitsune (12.5).

The Taira ranks are not free from such discord either, and they encounter similar problems at the very Battle of Yashima where Kajiwara's and Yoshitsune's feud begins. Having sighted Yoshitsune's small group, the Taira send a force of five hundred horsemen under Taira no Noritsune to attack the Yoshitsune at night (11.5). This assault never actually occurs, however, because Etchū no Moritsugi and Emi no Morikata quarrel until dawn over whose contingent will take the lead; with their opportunity to strike passed, the singer says, this setback ensures the Taira defeat at Yashima.

Although the imperial family is unable to quell the turbulence of the late 12th century CE, such instability is not blamed on poor imperial rule (where it obviously belongs) but on the people's sinful lack of reverence for the throne. After the rebellion of Prince Mochihito in Book 5 of the *Heike*, the singer laments that in earlier times, imperial edicts read aloud could cause dead trees to blossom anew and demanded obedience from birds in flight—there is even a follow-up story that when Emperor Daigo commanded a heron not to fly away and it obeyed, he rewarded its obedience with the promotion of the bird to the fifth rank at court and the title of Heron King, with a tablet hung around its neck that all might know (5.5). These sentiments are echoed later in the tale when, the capital having been ransacked by Yoshinaka's forces, a court official named Tomoyasu exclaims to Yoshinaka:

> In days gone by, when a herald
> read out the sovereign's decree,
> dead plants and trees put forth flowers,
> fruit promptly ripened on the bough,

> and demon powers bowed in assent.
> That we now live in the latter days makes no excuse
> for turning upon the sovereign endowed with all virtue
> and drawing the bow against him.
> The arrows you shoot will turn back to strike you!
> The swords you draw will cut *you*!   (*Heike* 8.10)

Beyond establishing the imperial house's ties to and power over the natural world, these passages serve an additional function in the narrative scheme of the *Heike* by providing proof of the fallen nature of the world in 12th-century Japan, which, especially in the minds of those singers who helped compose the Buddhist strain of *Heike* manuscripts,[17] in turn explained the weakness of imperial authority.

Such is the state of imperial and military authority in the *Heike*, where both Taira and Minamoto ranks are plagued by factional rivalries and weak, constantly changing loyalties. Their only recourse is effectively to bribe warriors to obey them with grants of booty, land, or political positions, and vassals seem quick to change sides when they grow doubtful of a clan's ability to deliver on its promises. In the face of such opportunism, then, loyalty in the world of the *Heike* is predicated on promises of rewards and success in battle. We see generally similar conditions among the Greeks and Trojans in the *Iliad*, where the authority of kings and princes is often maintained through promises of booty and battlefield trophies, and even then leaders are rarely able to command more than their own small regional contingents with any effectiveness.

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[17] The notion that the world had entered a period of decline was driven by a Buddhist concept dictating that time following the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment was divided into three periods: *shōbō*, *zōhō*, and *mappō*, the last of which was supposed to have been characterized by chaos and moral corruption throughout society because of the people's inability to follow the Buddha's teachings. Thanks to the heavy Buddhist influence in the *Heike*'s many variants, *mappō* and a general sense of decline are prominent themes in the tale throughout its textual history (see Chapter 1). For more on *mappō*, see Blum (2006) 31-51; for Buddhism in medieval Japan with extensive bibliography, see Ruppert (2017) 330-49.

There are, however, a few key differences between the two: while authority seems generally disrespected in both tales, regional leaders in the *Iliad* seem more effective at retaining the loyalty of their men—Achilles and Aeneas might hold back from fighting for the Greeks and Trojans, but neither defects to the other side, as so many Taira retainers do in the *Heike*'s later books. Moreover, threats of violence, particularly from Hector, actually appear to work in the *Iliad*, whereas similar threats made by Yoshitsune and some of the Taira seem not to deter their subordinates from abandoning them in battle or defecting. These conditions, coupled with the pervasive theme of Buddhist decline found in the *Heike*, suggest that competitive warrior culture was more disruptive to the Japanese structures of leadership and authority than it was to the Greeks. Historical evidence will bear this out, but will also reveal that the Greek society depicted in Homer is actually on the other side of the sort of turmoil seen during the Genpei War, and that earlier periods of Greek history were witness to much more drastic and damaging disruptions of authority.

III.3: Historical Evidence for the Decline of Central Authority

Another instructive difference between the leadership cultures of the Greeks and Japanese suggested in the *Heike* and substantiated by the behavior of high-ranking *bushi* throughout Japanese history is that a central authority (in this case the imperial court) held much greater ideological significance in Japanese society than in Homeric Greece. Although *bushi* routinely attempted to control, subvert, or even outright ignore the authority of the court, the endurance of that authority for seven centuries, and its frequent invocation to lend legitimacy to warrior governments in that time, speak to its importance as a concept. Minamoto no Yoritomo was arguably in an excellent position after the

Genpei War to establish a new government outside the bounds of imperial authority, which he did in part by locating his capital some distance from Kyoto at Kamakura, but he still sought imperial sanction for that government by arranging that he be appointed shogun, an office traditionally associated with supreme military leadership that dated back well into the Heian period. When this Kamakura *bakufu* was overthrown, however, it was simply replaced by another military government under the Ashikaga clan—again with the sanction of the emperor—and even in the tumultuous depths of the Warring States period (1467-1603 CE) victorious warlords sought to legitimize their rule through imperial support with appointment to the shogunate.

The importance of imperial sanction (no matter how superficial and symbolic it became) in Japanese society illuminates by contrast the lack of such a mechanism in the leadership culture of the Greeks. This difference must be accepted as a fact, and the reasons for it may be beyond the bounds of history to explain. But we may speculate (and it is no more than that) about why this element of leadership endured for so long in Japan but either never appeared or ceased to exist in Greece. One possibility is the comparatively greater age of the Japanese imperial court, which was held to have been founded in 660 BCE. Although this date is legendary, and there is considerable doubt among modern scholars that any of the emperors before the 5th century CE were actual historical figures,[18] it would nevertheless make the emperorship at least seven hundred years old in fact by the time of the Genpei War, and far older in belief. It is possible,

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[18] While tradition holds that the imperial family has maintained an unbroken line from Jimmu to the present, there is considerable doubt among scholars over the historicity of the first 25 emperors. The first emperor confirmed by multiple sources is Emperor Yūryaku, who exchanged missives with the Chinese emperor in 478 CE (see Piggott [1997] 44-65), and from his time onward we are able to find similar evidence for other emperors, as well as the imperial sons who founded the various branches of the Taira and Minamoto.

then, that the tradition of Japanese imperial leadership and the cultural significance of the court itself were considerably strengthened by the age of the institution and thereby was entrenched in medieval Japanese culture.

Another potential strengthening element for the Japanese monarchy was its adaptation of Chinese imperial ideology. The Chinese believed their emperor to be the "Son of Heaven," who exercised a certain amount of influence over the weather and whose morally upright behavior could ward off disasters of all kinds and ensure the prosperity of his people. The Japanese readily borrowed this concept, believing as they did that their emperor was descended from the sun goddess, and, as seen above in examples from the *Heike*, seem to have invested the emperor with religious as well as political authority and importance.[19] Having multiple strands of authority like these would only have bolstered the ideological staying-power of the imperial house, and the invocation of these multiple means of support for Greek kingly authority by a multitude of petty rulers suggests that the weakness and decline of that authority before the period when the Homeric poems were written down was the result mostly of there simply being too many kings in too small and area.

The decline of the Japanese imperial throne's executive authority effectively began with the decision to disband its army of peasant conscripts sometime in the 8th century CE,[20] and from this time on the imperial court effectively outsourced its military

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[19] Piggott (1997) 8-9. Piggott also discusses in detail the specific elements borrowed and adapted from the Chinese imperial system by the Japanese to create their imperial court.

[20] This *ritsuryō* ("legal decrees") system, instituted during the 7th century CE, brought all military activities in Japan under imperial control. All free males between 20 and 59 were eligible for military service, and soldiers were provided with weapons and armor by the state, which kept detailed and voluminous records of stores of weapons, armor, and other military equipment (Friday [2004] 22, 34-5). Because of its relative inefficiency, massive cost, and hefty administrative burden, however, conscription was entirely abandoned by 792, while many other elements of the *ritsuryō* system survived for a few more centuries, as did the

activities to small, private bands of warriors trained, armed, and mustered by land-owners

from the provinces.[21] This localized system was more effective and significantly less

costly than its predecessor, but brought with it an unforeseen danger: over time, warriors'

power and influence grew more independent from their imperial masters, even as the

members of the imperial court relied increasingly on privately contracted *bushi* clans to

fight on their behalf in the power struggles that so frequently plagued the imperial family

in late Heian Japan.[22] The diminution of imperial power was partially a self-inflicted

wound, but its severity was exacerbated by significant cultural differences between

provincial *bushi* and the imperial court. As shown above in the *Heike*, loyalties between

bushi were actually quite weak, which meant that the imperial court found itself faced

with an unforeseen problem: by outsourcing all military prerogatives to private warbands,

they had placed all martial power in the hands of hyper-competitive mercenaries. The

result was the gradual rise of warrior government and, later, the dissolution of effective

central authority in Japan. This in turn fragmented the Japanese structure of provincial

administration and promoted the rise of independent regional warlords, whose pursuit of

power would lead to four hundred years of instability and civil war following the

conclusion of the struggle between the Minamoto and Taira.

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basic requirement of imperial approval for all military activity, which remained in place even after the
Genpei War (see n. 16).

[21] For the conscript armies of the *ritsuryō* system, see Friday (1992) 8-32; for private, post-*ritsuryō* armies,
Friday (1992) 70-88; for this system's relevance to the later 12th century and the events of the Genpei War,
Friday (2004) 34-62; Shapinsky (2017) 138-56.

[22] Most of the *monogatari* of the early medieval period record wars between imperial factions. The *Hōgen,
Heiji,* and *Heike* are not only notable examples of this, but the events of each tale also relate directly to the
one that follows it chronologically: the fighting of the *Hōgen* led to rivalry between Taira Kiyomori and
Minamoto Yoshitomo, which encouraged Yoshitomo's rebellion over imperial succession recounted in the
Heiji; Kiyomori's brutal treatment of the defeated Minamoto, along with Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's
displeasure at Kiyomori's abuse of power after his appointment to the office of chancellor of the realm, then
spurred the Minamoto to retaliate in the Genpei War, the setting of the *Heike*.

We have only a limited picture of what rulership might have looked like in Mycenaean Greece. The mundane scribblings of Linear B—the syllabic Mycenaean script found written on baked clay tablets—that remain,[23] however, seem to depict an extensive hierarchy for each palace center under the authority of a central ruler,[24] a structure somewhat akin to a microcosm of the Japanese imperial court. Also like the Japanese bureaucratic system, these hierarchies and the palaces in which they functioned were overthrown by similar, albeit more severe, regional political fragmentations and outbreaks of violence. Perhaps what most notably separates the Mycenaean period from medieval Japan, however, is our general lack of understanding of the processes that brought about the fragmentation and violence that played at least some role in the destruction of the Mycenaean world.

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[23] For the first thorough description of the Linear B script along with a selection of the more important Mycenaean tablets in their original text and in translation, see Chadwick (1973). A more updated analysis of the Linear B tablets with considerations of the fragments discovered since Chadwick's time can be found in Duhoux and Morpurgo Davies (2008), (2011), (2014).

[24] While there is consensus that the Mycenaean palaces were governed through an administrative hierarchy, debate remains focused on the extent of that administration's reach within the Mycenaean world. Desborough (1964) 218 argued that the archaeological evidence and mention of a king of the 'Ahhiyawa' (possibly the Achaeans) by the Hittites are indicative of a unified Mycenaean kingdom under a single ruler, whereas other scholars at the same time contended that the different palace centers were each ruled by independent kings (Catling [1961] 33; Thomas [1970] 184-92, [1976] 93-116). For the Ahhiyawa and Mycenae, see Finkelberg (1998) 127-34; Bryce (1989a-b), (1999) 257-64; Mee (1998) 137-45; Mountjoy (1998); Niemeier (1998), 17-65, (1999) 141-56; Karantzali (2001); Sherratt (2001); Kelder (2004-5) 151-60; Beckman, Bryce, and Cline (2011); Emanuel (2017) 41-50). The former position remained popular for a time (see, for example, most of the essays in Hägg and Marinatos [1987]), but fell out of favor as a consequence of closer scrutiny applied to the Linear B tablets in the last few decades (see Shear [2004] 54-7; Galaty and Parkinson [2007]). More recently, some have begun to argue anew for a unified Mycenaean kingdom based on new archaeological evidence, such as the concentration of luxury goods, elite tombs, and monumental architecture at Mycenae from LHIIIA onward (Wright and Dabney [1990]; Eder and Jung [2015]) and the material culture of many Mycenaean sites (Kelder [2008] 49-74, [2010]; Younger [2010]; Eder and Jung [2015], Wiener [2017] 43-74). I agree that the tablets might depict a regionalized Mycenaean world, but, as I will argue later in this chapter, it seems unlikely that the palaces would have adopted similar administrative structures or demonstrated such impressive command of mass labor independently of one another, and, therefore, although regional and independent in the last phase of their existence, probably represent the fragments of an earlier Mycenaean kingdom ruled by one king.

Even the ancient Greeks themselves were unaware of what happened to their Mycenaean predecessors, and there is little from periods of later Greek history to guide our search for causes of the Mycenaean collapse. So far as we understand, the subsequent conditions of rulership and political authority in the late Iron Age and the early Archaic period are far removed from those of the Mycenaeans. Regional, ethnic, and tribal divisions seem to have characterized the politics of these periods, and political authority was rarely maintained by an individual or even a single family for more than a few miles' distance.[25] When city-states finally did form in some of these regions, the monarchs (tyrants) that briefly held sway over them were treated as notable departures from the norm, rulers of a sort that had to be imagined more than remembered after centuries spent forgetting the ghostly kingdoms of the Mycenaeans. Whatever the tyrants' ideological provenance, their sudden entry onto the stage of Greek politics—and nearly as swift removal from it—is a telling reminder of how far Greek concepts of rulership had wandered from their Mycenaean roots.

Comparison of the *Iliad* and *Heike* and their respective historical contexts, given the similarities between the interactions of competitive warrior culture and leadership in both tales established above, might be a useful way of exploring new explanations for how the Mycenaean world came undone. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will examine the similarities between the historical systems used in the administration of medieval Japanese provinces and the palace "states" of Mycenaean Greece, using the former as a model to see how we might attempt to fill in the considerable gaps in our understanding of the latter. First, we will try to use the more abundant evidence of the

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[25] Whitley (1991) 341-65.

early Japanese historical period, where an emperor reigned and ruled with the aid of a system of administrative legal codes, called the *ritsuryō* ("legal decrees") system,[26] to consider whether it is possible to reconstruct a similar phase of rulership (Phase A) in Bronze Age Greece during the ascent of the Mycenaean world, a period for which there is very little evidence. Next, the *Heike*'s weakened imperial bureaucracy might serve as a useful model for a society in turmoil, one in which central authority has begun to decline and diffuse to lower-ranking officials (Phase B), which seems to fit relatively well with Mycenaean Greece in the 13th and 12th centuries BCE—the best attested period of the Greek Bronze Age when Mycenaean society had likely reached its height and the seeds of its collapse had only begun being sown. These two phases can in turn be used to develop an understanding of the society depicted in the Homeric poems, where the vestiges of central authority remain, but rulers like Agamemnon and Priam must coerce their followers in the same manner as the lords who are nominally beneath them (Phase C), which was the condition of Japan briefly during the later 12th century CE and after the Ōnin War of 1467-77, as well as likely that of Greece at the time of the Mycenaean collapse and beginning of the Iron Age.

Phase A, Establishment of Centralized Authority and Economy:

Unsurprisingly, evidence for Phase A is sparsest in both Greece and Japan, but it is comparatively much greater for the Japanese and improves through the course of the Heian period. Some of the earliest traces of a powerful central authority in Japan come to us from the Kofun period (300-538 CE), when rulers able to command mass labor had

[26] For more on the several legal codes that led to the formation of the *ritsuryō* state, see Hirano (1985) 446-551; Aoki (1992); Sakaue (2017) 84-9.

their tombs buried beneath huge mounds and filled with artifacts at a technological level

similar to that found in Mycenaean Greece.[27] Yet the real emergence of the Japanese

imperial court appears in the subsequent Asuka period (538-710 CE), particularly during

the reigns of Prince Regent Shōtoku and his successors, who were especially influenced

by the Chinese imperial system and who enacted the first reforms that began the

codification of the *ritsuryō* system.[28] The strength of the imperial throne is revealed well

in subsequent centuries with the full implementation of the *ritsuryō* state, during which

time the Japanese archipelago—naturally split into different cultural regions because of

its mountainous topography and multiple islands separated by ocean straits—was

effectively joined into a culturally coherent polity through a system of land distribution

and provincial administration centered around the bureaucracy of the court.[29]

At its core, the *ritsuryō* system was most concerned with provincial taxation.

Under its laws, censuses were supposed to be taken every six years (later twelve), and the

holders of publicly allotted land (*kubunden*) [30] were required to keep household registers

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[27] Tsude (1991) 5-38, (1992) 64-86 and Piggott (1997) view the Kofun period's tombs as markers of growing central authority and believe this period to be the beginning of state formation in Japan. For more on the evolution of these "core" sites from the Kofun to the Heian period, also see Tsude (1988) 1-16 and Suzuki (1993) 55-74. For background on the archaeological sites, fragmentary literary evidence, and the controversial theory that the Japanese imperial family is descended from Korean rulers, Barnes (2006) collects the literature, primarily in Japanese.

[28] For the Chinese-influenced reforms of Shōtoku and others of his time, see Piggott (1997) 85-101. There has been significant debate in the last several decades over the degree to which the *ritsuryō* government was modeled after that of Tang China; earlier scholars (particularly in English) like Asakawa (1903), Reischauer (1937), Crump (1952) 35-58, (1953), Sansom (1958), Hall (1966), and Miller (1978) tended to argue that Japanese courtiers diligently copied the Tang system with poor results, while more recent scholarship has emphasized the differences between Chinese and Japanese government and the various ways in which the Japanese adapted Chinese offices and principles to the unique situation of their own court and its administrative needs (Inoue [1977] 83-112, [1986a] 132-56, [1986b] 83-157; Hori [1982] 72-105; Yoshida [1983]; Borgen [1986]; Ōtsu [1993a] 371-9, [1993b] 3-74; Seki [1996a] 67-72, [1996b] 167-202; Sakaue [2017] 82-98).

[29] Suzuki (1993) 55-74; Taranczewski (2017) 116-18.

[30] An estimated 80% of the arable land under imperial control was allotted to households as *kubunden* ("per person fields"), while the remainder was leased yearly for a portion of crop yields as rent (Taranczewski [2017] 118). For more on *kubunden* in the *ritsuryō* tax system, see Batten (1993) 103-34.

(*koseki*)—many of which survive—that were evaluated on the same schedule.[31] These

households were in turn grouped together into districts overseen by district officials

(*gunji*), who collected taxes in the form of labor and goods from all non-courtier males

aged 17-65, maintained infrastructure for irrigation and granaries, and reported to the

imperially appointed provincial governor (*zuryō*), the highest military and police

authority in each province.[32] This administrative system appears to have functioned

relatively well for several centuries, and the general consensus among scholars is that its

first signs of stress only began to manifest themselves in the 10th and early 11th

centuries, when the state ceased its periodic allotments of land and the last new

household registers were compiled.[33] Not all the causes for these changes are known, but

they generally appear to have been responses to broader trends toward greater regional

autonomy, which were likely triggered by the growing influence of provincial *bushi* after

their emancipation from the *ritsuryō* system's short-lived conscription system a few

centuries earlier.

After these changes to land allotments and household registers, the next blow to

the strength of the central government was an overall change in the tax system. Instead

of the original *ritsuryō* tax system, which relied mostly on a per capita tax on the goods

and labor of eligible males significantly more heavily than on their land—*kubunden* were

taxed only about 3-5 percent of their yearly yield—emphasis shifted toward a much

steeper tax on previously allotted *kubunden*. But because no new *kubunden* were being

given out and the estates of court elites were exempt from taxation, this change

[31] Taranczewski (2017) 118. Kishi (1973) discusses household registers in detail.
[32] Sakaue (2017) 89; Taranczewski (2017) 118-19.
[33] Hayakawa (1974) 33; Yoshida (1983); Taranczewski (2017) 121.

significantly reduced the number of taxable subjects and spurred governors to focus on

squeezing as much revenue as possible from households, gradually weakening regional

infrastructure and destabilizing the tax base as more household heads sought to evade

taxation. To compensate for this weakness, governors were given more autonomy, for

good and ill, in their tax collecting duties: to encourage more aggressive collection, they

were allowed to keep for themselves any taxes collected beyond their designated quota,

but were also required to make up for shortages from their own coffers. From here,

governors quickly devolved into tax farmers, and they sought to derive as much profit

from their assignments as possible with minimal concern for the other duties of

provincial administration outlined in other *ritsuryō* laws. In consequence, governors

often sent proxies to the provinces so they could remain in the capital and play at politics.

With courtiers disconnected from all but the most rudimentary administrative appendages

of the state, then, members of the local elite—nearly all of them *bushi*—assumed a

greater level of influence and control in the provinces to make up for governors' neglect

of their former duties, and they built networks of dependents and retainers through family

ties and grants of largess.[34]

The proliferation of these provincial networks and their growth in power and

importance had already been aided by the imperial court's 8th-century disbandment of its

state-funded army and ongoing policy of outsourcing all military activities to provincial

bushi, since it had created an environment where the competitive, rewards-based culture

of medieval *bushi* could flourish.[35] While this has been pointed to as the moment when

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[34] Taranczewski (2017) 122-6. On the *ritsuryō* tax system, see Murai (1965); Sakamoto (1972); Batten (1993) 103-34. On tax farming, see Toda (1967) 241-77; Sakamoto (1972) 241-336.
[35] Friday (2004) 35-8; Sakaue (2017) 89.

warrior power first began to dominate Japan, we must be cautious of giving the change too much weight, for the Heian period was a relatively stable one: it was only in the 12th century that warrior houses started to exercise a more significant influence over court politics, and, even in the 1170s, the upheaval of the imperial system caused by a Minamoto victory in the Genpei War was far from expected.[36] In fact, although the alterations made to the *ritsuryō* state through the course of the Heian certainly decreased the central government's ability to respond to crises at a significant scale, they still likely *increased* the central power and overall influence of the imperial court—local elites assumed a stronger leadership role and gained greater local influence, but they did so with the patronage of the Kyoto nobility, and these patron-client relationships arguably gave the wealthy court elite more control over the provinces, at least for a time, than did legal compulsion.[37]

The Heian was therefore a time of relative prosperity for the Japanese imperial government. Although the privatization of military prerogatives, tax collection, and other provincial administrative duties during the period would later prove to undermine the governing strength of the court, attenuation of imperial authority was very gradual, as was the process of decentralization itself. Even the establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu* in the late-12th century by the Minamoto saw elite *bushi* coopting—rather than replacing—the governing authority and administrative functions previously held by the court, which displays well the importance of that authority in the culture of medieval Japanese leadership.

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[36] Friday (1992) 175-7, (2004) 43-57.
[37] Adolphson (2007) 212-44, (2017) 103; Friday (2008), (2010) 179-96; Soga (2012).

There is considerably less evidence available with which to reconstruct Phase A among the Greeks, but we can assume with some certainty that the centralized system of economic administration in the Mycenaean kingdoms that is attested in the Linear B tablets did not materialize overnight—instead, it seems more logical to assume that the system, as was the case in Heian Japan, was probably built up and grew in sophistication and scale over the course of several centuries. If such a process did occur, it would most likely have been during the first centuries of the Late Helladic period (1650-1050 BCE), beginning with LHI through the end of LHIIA (1650-1450). It was at this time that Mycenaean civilization appears to have expanded and prospered considerably, as attested by a notable increase in the population and number of settlements in southern Greece, where several larger structures and walls were built at sites that would later be home to the impressive palace fortresses of the Mycenaean world.[38] This increase in prosperity was likely aided by expanding Aegean trade networks, as shown by the luxury goods found in shaft graves and *tholos* tombs at Mycenae and other palace sites, which only increase in number and fineness over time, and the construction of these palaces and elaborate burial sites would have required a sizeable, coordinated labor force.[39]

Yet the first few centuries of the Late Helladic period probably show us only the beginnings of central power in Mycenaean Greece, and the real expansion of central authority, along with the creation of the palace-centered economic system imperfectly glimpsed in the Linear B tablets, which all date to a later period (~1300-1190), likely occurred in LHIIB through LHIIIA (1450-1300). It was during this time that the large,

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[38] Zangger (1994) 189-212; Thomas and Conant (1999); Thaler (2006) 93-116; Bintliff (2012) 181-4.
[39] Evans (1929); Karo (1930); Wright (1987) 171-84; Halstead (1992) 64; Laffineur (1995) 81-94; Younger (1997) 229-34; Cavanaugh and Mee (1998); Voutsaki (1999) 103-17.

fortified citadels and other impressive public works and monuments for which the

Mycenaeans are famous were constructed,[40] and Greek influence appears to have been

extended further abroad through both colonization and conquest, resulting in an increased

number of settlements in the Aegean, Crete, and even along the western coast of Asia

Minor,[41] which fostered trade contacts further into the Near East and as far west as

Spain.[42] Because of the similarities found among these building projects and the ceramic

wares and other goods that circulated throughout the Bronze Age Mediterranean, it also is

commonly believed that the Mycenaean world possessed a uniform culture, and that

some system of economic and social administration must have existed in order to

facilitate construction and trade on such a scale.[43]

Unfortunately, our evidence for this phase of Mycenaean history allows for little

more to be said with any certainty. This is where later Mycenaean evidence must be used

in concert with comparative evidence from medieval Japan to fill the gap, for while we

can only guess at how the administrative structures of the Mycenaean palace centers

might have expanded their power and influence from LHIIB to LHIIIA, we are much

more certain how the *ritsuryō* system and its expansive bureaucracy evolved over several

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[40] Construction likely occurred around 1400 BCE and continued throughout the Late Helladic period (Wright [2006] 7-52; Adrimi-Sismani [2007] 159-77).

[41] Mycenaean activity in west Asia Minor is likely attested in Hittite records; see Güterbock (1983) 133-8; Bryce (1989a) 1-20, (1989b) 297-310; Mee (1998) 137-45; Mountjoy (1998) 33-67; Niemeier (1998) 17-65, (1999) 141-56; as well as the bibliography given in n. 24.

[42] Cline (2007) 190-200 argues that trade goods from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria/Palestine, Cyprus, and Anatolia were heavily concentrated in the palace centers at Mycenae, Tiryns, and Thebes, and that the centers were responsible for conducting trade with these regions and then acting as distributors of trade goods in Greece itself. Moreover, Mycenaean wares have been found throughout the eastern and central Mediterranean of the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, with large concentrations of these items having originated in the Berbati Valley near Mycenae (Emanuel [2017] 18-19). See also Sherratt and Sherratt (1991); Karageorghis (1992); Cline (1994); Burns (2010); Ben-Shlomo, Nodarou, and Rutter (2011); Lehmann (2013).

[43] On cultural uniformity in Mycenaean Greece, see Desborough (1964) 219; Thomas (1970) 191, (1976) 96; Mee and Cavanaugh (1984) 45-64; Voutsaki and Killen (2001) 1-14; Pullen and Tartaron (2007) 148. For economic and social administration, see n. 42.

centuries in Japan. But as the next phase will show, the administrative systems of

Mycenaean Greece and medieval Japan share several similarities—as do the competitive

martial cultures that eventually undermined them—and it is therefore tempting to

speculate that the Mycenaean system attested to by the Linear B tablets in the 13th and

12th centuries BCE had an earlier genesis also somewhat similar to that of *ritsuryō* Japan.

To be clear, this is in no way an attempt to explain the Mycenaean administrative

system as a 1:1 parallel with the Japanese *ritsuryō* state—the disparity in scale alone is

enough to render such an equation dubious, not to mention the significant differences

between Japanese and Greek agriculture. Nevertheless, the most important and

informative element of this comparison moving forward is the relationship between the

central governing authority and its smaller, peripheral appendages, which—accounting

for differences in scale and culture—may have been quite similar in both Mycenaean

Greece and medieval Japan.

Phase B, Height and Beginning of Decline:

It was not until the 12th century CE that Japan reached Phase B, and the eclipse of

court power by that of private warriors from the provinces that brought it about was also

a gradual process. As described above, this had technically begun much earlier in the

Heian period at the end of the 8th century, when the imperial court privatized its military

and effectively started hiring small war-bands of provincial warriors to handle police

duties and, eventually, to fight on behalf of their individual members' interests.[44] What

resulted from this change in the centuries that followed was the creation of numerous

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[44] *Bushi* war-bands were typically linked by kinship in addition to patronage (Farris [1992] 268-9; Friday [2004] 39-40).

vertical alliances between powerful imperial courtiers and provincial *bushi*.[45] While it

took several centuries for problems to manifest themselves, the main liability of these

networks was the relative fragility of the relationships they fostered, for Heian culture

had neither the moral nor legal mechanisms by which to bind warriors to their courtier

masters: the deeply ingrained sense of loyalty for which the samurai of the Edo period are

famous was nowhere to be found in the 12th century, and there were no laws or contracts

compelling *bushi* to fulfill their obligations.[46] Instead, the most reliable way to command

a warrior's obedience was, as shown in the *Heike*, through offers of political positions and

rights to land, or through promises of conquest.[47]

   This proved a rather unstable means of control, however, for emperors and

courtiers could only buy *bushi* loyalty to a certain extent—the war tales of the 12th

century ably show the danger imperial officials and family members courted by involving

provincial warrior houses in their political struggles. Eventually, *bushi* political power

became so dominant that warriors were able to gain entry into the ranks of the imperial

court or to bypass court authority almost entirely. Some *bushi*, like the Taira, were aided

in this effort by new resources gained from trade with China, which was overseen on a

provincial or even individual basis, since regular Japanese trade with China and other

powers to the west had been minimal before the 12th century.[48] But the simple economic

advantages granted by trade aside, rare and expensive goods would also have been of

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[45] Adolphson (2017) 103.
[46] Friday (1992) 120-1.
[47] Friday (1992) 116; Conlan (2003) 163-4; Adolphson (2017) 107-8. In this vein, the imperial government used what were once temporary titles given to provincial officials for police actions—*ōryōshi* ("territory seizure officer")*, tsuibushi* ("pursuit and capture officer")*,* and *kebiishi* ("police chief")—to maintain control over the military activities of provincial *bushi* (Friday [1992] 123-4). But these temporary grants soon became permanent fixtures of provincial administration, gradually losing their coercive appeal as the bonds between central courtiers and peripheral warriors weakened.
[48] Souyri (2017) 267-8.

great value in the acquisitive culture of *bushi*, and scholars are unanimous in their

assessment that Taira no Kiyomori's power and influence came in equal measure from his

connections with the imperial family and his control of trade with China through his

clan's control of multiple provinces with ports.[49] For these reasons, from the 12th century

onward the emperor was increasingly relegated to serving as an honorary figurehead.

Because the imperial family lacked the close provincial connections and, in some cases,

the lucrative trade contacts of the most successful *bushi* houses, emperors increasingly

were compelled to use their ancient authority to signal to their subjects whose power

should actually be obeyed.[50]

After the ouster of the Taira with the conclusion of the Genpei War and

establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu*, Minamoto no Yoritomo restructured and adapted

what remained of the *ritsuryō* provincial system to a new era of imperial-sanctioned

warrior rule. He did this by effectively changing the names and slightly rearranging

some of the functions of preexisting *ritsuryō* offices, and then offering those positions

exclusively to *bushi*.[51] To replace provincial governors, the Kamakura government

appointed military governors (*shugo*), who exercised military and police authority similar

to their predecessors, and the new estate stewards (*jitō*) seem to have fulfilled a

somewhat similar role as *gunji* did by presiding over larger, consolidated estates.[52] Like

so much else in Japanese political history, this transformation was also gradual: *shugo*

replaced provincial governors wholesale in the east, but the two officials existed at the

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[49] Hasegawa (1967) 66; Farris (1992) 277.

[50] This was the general trend for imperial behavior after the Genpei War; the few exceptions resulted in the Jōkyū War of 1221 and the Genkō War of 1331-3, neither of which led to a lasting restoration of imperial sovereignty.

[51] Shapinsky (2017) 139-40.

[52] For more on *shugo* and *jitō*, see Mass (1990) 46-88, (1997) 17-38, (1999); Kakehi (2001); Friday (2004) 46-57; Takahashi (2009) 18-31; Yanagihara (2014) 113-44; Nishitani (2014) 113-51.

same time further away from Kamakura in central and western Japan even as late as the 14th century.[53] Much of the reason for this was likely the *bakufu*'s use of the title *gokenin* ("honorable houseman") for its favored retainers—a title created to try to maintain their loyalty—to help determine the selection of *shugo* and *jitō*, who could only be drawn from among the ranks of the *gokenin*.[54] Because the Minamoto came from the eastern provinces of the Kantō region, they would have been able to convert many of the currently serving governors and *gunji*, who were probably their subjects already, into *shugo* and *jitō* with relative ease; yet in the provinces of the center and west, which had until recently been under sway of the Taira, it would have been more difficult to assign these new posts to men of proven loyalty so far away from the Minamoto power base, and it probably took considerable time for the new warrior government to extend its grasp to the Kansai plain and over to southern the islands of Shikoku and Kyushu.

The creation of the *gokenin* category thus functioned as an incentive for other warriors to pledge their loyalty to the Minamoto banner, because only in this way would they have been able to obtain coveted provincial appointments. But the elevation of *bushi* to positions of provincial government, complete with all the military and police authority attendant upon those offices, had unforeseen consequences for the stability of the Kamakura and Ashikaga regimes: *bushi* did not spontaneously transform into court aristocrats whose loyalty to central authority was relatively strong, but continued to operate under the same opportunistic, acquisitive culture that had held their war bands together for the past several centuries. In no time, *shugo* were seeking to expand and strengthen their influence by gaining control of key locations—sometimes in other

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[53] Nagahara (1990) 264; Souyri (2001) 55; Kakehi (2001) 42-56; Shapinsky (2017) 141.
[54] Mass (1999); Takahashi (2009); Shapinsky (2017) 140.

provinces—or by bringing *jitō* into their service as personal vassals.[55] This trend quickly

took on its own competitive tenor that began to undermine the power and authority of the

shogun, thanks to its emphasis on the closer relationships local and regional officials

were able to forge with their vassals. Because these officials, and not the emperor or

shogun, were ultimately responsible for supplying the rewards and honors that *bushi* so

ardently desired, the true loyalty of the majority of the shogun's subjects lay with their

local leaders, whose appointments as *shugo* often afforded them the power and wealth

needed to buy such loyalty. The cooption of imperial authority and adaptation of the

ritsuryō system by the Kamakura *bakufu* therefore only provided a new means by which

warriors could gain power and expand their influence at the regional level, which

gradually grew beyond the bounds of the shogunate's control. In light of how the Taira

and Minamoto had so flagrantly undermined the authority of the imperial throne during

and after the Genpei War, this should have come as no surprise. For once that central

authority was stripped of its power to rule, there was no longer a powerful center that

could stabilize the periphery—instead, the lords of the periphery, in a fashion befitting

the hyper-competitive culture of *bushi*, continued to disregard central authority and began

to envision their provincial holdings as centers unto themselves.

     This Japanese transition from a strong central authority that ruled and reigned to

one that only lent legitimacy to other, truer sources of power and moved gradually toward

regionalism might show some parallels with the Mycenaean world during LHIIIB (1300-

1190 BCE). This is the period likely reflected in the Linear B tablets, making it the most

source-rich epoch of the Greek Bronze Age. While there is not enough information from

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[55] Mass (1974b) 157-83; Arnesen (1979); Nagahara (1990) 265-8; Miyamoto (2004) 676-95; Nishitani (2014) 135-6; Shapinsky (2017) 140-1.

the tablets to get a clear picture of how the Mycenaean administrative structure operated—debate still rages over the functions of various officials mentioned in the tablets, as well as their relationship with the palace centers and peripheral communities—there are some significant aspects of this period that seem relatively certain and that point to parallels with the Japanese systems reviewed above.

For one, military power, illustrated by impressive numbers of chariots, suits of bronze armor, and other equipment,[56] appears to have been concentrated in the palace centers themselves, implying a military system that was to some degree directed and funded by a centralized government. Most of our information on the bureaucratic structure of the palaces that would likely have overseen the distribution of these arms and other military functions comes from the Linear B tablets found at Knossos, Pylos, and other sites, the majority of which date to LHIIIB2 and early LHIIIC (1230-1130).[57] But those tablets also seem to indicate that land had begun to be distributed among members of Mycenaean society at some point in previous centuries' growing prosperity, as much of the hierarchy described in the tablets seems to have been devoted to the administration of a land distribution system. These land allotments, called *temenoi*, appear to have been held in proportionally larger amounts by high-ranking officials: the *wanax* ("king, lord") at LHIIIC Pylos, for example, seems to have owned three times as much land as the next

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[56] The so-called "Armory Tablets" from Knossos record that chariots were stored in the palace separately from their wheels (Chadwick [1973] 361), and it appears from these and other tablets that arrows and bronze cuirasses were kept in the palaces along with chariots, meaning that warriors were probably outfitted to some degree at palatial expense. For the o-ka tablets and their bearing on our understanding of Mycenaean military practice, see Uchitel (1984) 136-63; Lang (1990) 113-25; Shelmerdine (1999) 403-10. On Mycenaean chariots, see Uchitel (1988) 47-58; Drews (1993); Driessen (1995a) 481-98; Schon (2007) 133-45. For military matters more generally, see Deger-Jakoltzy (1999) 121-31; Dickinson (1999) 21-7; Bendall (2003) 181-231; Shelmerdine (2006) 78-9; Crielaard (2011) 94.
[57] For collections and analyses of these tablets from Knossos, see Chadwick et al. (1986-90). For Pylos, see Bennett and Olivier (1973-6); Bennet (1998) 111-33. For Thebes, see Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi (2001).

highest officials,[58] and many other tablets from Pylos and Knossos also indicate that

communal plots were leased or allotted to individuals in the village communities

surrounding the palaces.[59] Plots were used to cultivate everything from wheat, flax,

olives, figs, and grapes, to various types of livestock, all the products of which are

attested in the tablets.[60] It is generally assumed that these goods appear in the tablets

because of their involvement in some form of taxation, as it seems that land was

effectively leased to its holders by the palace in return for a portion of the products

cultivated on each plot.[61] Moreover, scholars believe that personal names given in tablets

associated with livestock and some agricultural goods are those of individuals who

collected a percentage of those products, although it is unclear what these people did with

them or what their precise roles were in the palace economy.[62]

Based on these patterns of land distribution and the title's other associations in the

tablets with supreme authority,[63] it also seems likely that the *wanax* sat atop the hierarchy

of each palace. Beyond the *wanax*, it is also possible to piece together from the Linear B

tablets a picture of a Mycenaean palace's political and economic administration: beneath

the *wanax* were palace officials of various ranks who oversaw military (*lawagetas*) and

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[58] See tablet Er 312 (Chadwick [1973] 266).

[59] For a group of more robust tablets describing land ownership and use, see Chadwick (1973) 232-74. For discussion of the tablets and their implications for the economic and political administration of the Pylian kingdom, see Morris (1986); Shelmerdine (2001) 113-28; Nakassis (2010) 127-48.

[60] On wheat, olives, and other plant products, see Killen (1998) 19-23, (2004) 155-73. For wine, see Palmer (1994). On livestock, Halstead (1999) 187-99, (2001) 38-50, (2003) 257-61.

[61] Bennet (1992) 65-101; Voutsaki (2001) 195-213; Schon (2011) 219-27.

[62] Bennet (1992) 65-101; Rougemont (2001) 129-38.

[63] The title *wanax* appears 32 times in the entire corpus of Linear B tablets, leaving much room for speculation over his role and powers in the Mycenaean system. See Hooker (1979) 100-1, (1987) 257-67; Carlier (1984) 3-230, (1996) 101-9; Panagl (1986); Palaima (1993) 322, (1995a) 119-139, (2006) 53-71; Thomas (1995) 349-54; Wright (1995) 63-80; Yamagata (1997) 1-14; Shear (2004) 41-8; Shelmerdine (2007) 40-6; Small (2007) 47-53; Crielaard (2011).

palatial (*telestai*) functions,[64] and the territories outside the palace centers were administered by officials of varying levels of authority called *damokoro*, *koretere*, *porokoretere*, and *qasireu*.[65] While villages and regions do appear to have exercised a degree of economic independence with respect to at least some of the crops they grew,[66] the palaces seem to have been central to the economy of each kingdom. The *wanax* or other palace officials were probably responsible for overseeing trade, which kept the Mycenaean world supplied not only with some luxury goods like dyes and precious metals, but also with other vital resources like copper and tin.[67] Moreover, records also indicate that the palace seems to have had oversight of several forms of luxury good production that included textiles, furniture, and perfumes, which were both traded abroad and circulated locally.[68]

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[64] For more on the *lawagetas*, see Thomas (1976) 100-1; van Effenterre (1977) 36-55; Palaima (2004) 217-36; Small (2007) 47-53; Kelder (2008) 49-74. For *telestai*: Thomas (1976) 105-6; Hooker (1987) 257-67; Scafa (2008) 707-33; Jiménez Delgado (2013) 207-16.

[65] Many scholars have attempted to reconstruct the leadership structure of the Mycenaean palaces and delineate the functions of these offices, with general agreement on their hierarchy: see Wyatt (1962) 21-41; Chadwick (1972) 100-16; Shelmerdine (1973); Cherry (1977) 76-83; Bennet (1985) 231-49, (1995) 587-602; Kilian (1988) 291-302; Driessen (1995b) 244-6; Varias Garcia (1999) 595-600; Shelmerdine and Bennet (2008) 289-309; Eder and Jung (2015) 113-40.

[66] Most of the palaces appear to have stored only a few staple crops, and never enough to feed the estimated population of their respective kingdoms. As such, other crops attested in the archaeological record but not found in the palace stores were probably grown and kept locally, and it is unclear to what degree they were used in paying taxes or whether they were grown on land allotted by the palaces or held privately. See Shelmerdine (1981) 324-5; Yamakawa (1988) 443-8; Halstead (1992) 64-70; Shelton (2007) 172-3.

[67] Bass (1997) 154-70; Cline (2007) 190-200; Halstead (2007) 66-73; Parkinson (2007) 87-101; Schon (2007) 133-45; Burns (2010). On dyes, see Sarpaki (2001) 195-265. For metals, see Dialismas (2001) 121-43; Michailidou (2008) 521-40.

[68] Contrary to earlier opinions on the function of luxury goods in Mycenaean society, Murray (2017) argues that elites seem only to have hoarded and displayed luxury goods in the earlier phases of the Late Helladic, and that their use during the period represented by the tablets was primarily for production and distribution (see also Voutsaki [2001] 195-213). For textile production, see Burke (1997) 413-22; Nosch (2011) 495-505; Alberti, Aravantinos, del Freo, Papadaki, and Rougemont (2012) 87-106; Varias Garcia (2012) 155-62. On furniture, see Killen (2003) 63-76; Varias Garcia (2008) 775-94. For perfumery, see Foster (1977) 19-51; Shelmerdine (1985). On workshops, production, and record keeping more generally, see Gregersen (1997) 43-55; Shelmerdine (1997) 387-96.

It also appears that by this time the Mycenaean world had fragmented into separate, regional kingdoms, each ruled by a *wanax* from a palace at sites like Pylos, Mycenae, Thebes, Knossos, and others.[69] The degree to which these kingdoms interacted with one another is unclear, but the continued presence of a coherent Mycenaean material and artistic culture in the archaeological record during LHIIIB-C, especially in light of the drastic regional variation characteristic of Greece in nearly all its subsequent history, suggests an appreciable degree of centralization and uniformity in the Mycenaean world before this period.[70] Based on these factors, it is possible that this uniformity in Mycenaean society was the result of its originally having been ruled by a single king who had overseen its initial phases of prosperity and growth, and that it had thus fragmented into regional, independent kingdoms only recently. Much of the initial prosperity and growth of our Japanese parallel occurred under a more centralized imperial government, so perhaps a similar process occurred in Mycenaean Greece during the largely unattested Phase A discussed above, and the regional fragmentation evident in Phase B was a recent development similar to the fragmentation that was beginning to occur near the end of the Kamakura period in Japan.

Evidence of early and greater prosperity at Mycenae compared to other palace sites, along with a greater concentration of elite tombs there,[71] is a tantalizing hint at what might earlier have been the beginning of a Mycenaean "empire" under the rule of a single

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[69] The mention of a *wanax* in the Linear B tablets from Pylos, Thebes, and Knossos have led many scholars to conclude that each Mycenaean palace was ruled by a distinct *wanax* and that, based on later Greek difficulties with unifying against even foreign enemies (Shear [2004] 132 n. 296), the Mycenaean world was never ruled by a single king (also see n. 24). Whatever the case, it does appear that by the time of the Linear B tablets the palaces presided over relatively distinct Mycenaean "states" (Cosmopoulos [2006] 205-28).

[70] For Mycenaean cultural uniformity, see n. 43.

[71] Wright (1987) 171-84, (2008) 144-53l ; Voutsaki (1995) 55-66, (1998) 41-58.

"high king"—perhaps the original meaning intended by the term *wanax*. This arrangement is similar to the one idealized by Agamemnon and a few others in the *Iliad*, for Agamemnon was the king of Mycenae, and, based on the concentration of these tombs at Mycenae in comparison with the rest of the Mycenaean world, that ruler's authority might actually have overshadowed that of other Greek leaders.[72] While the expansion of settlements and trade networks in Phase A could have occurred under the leadership of several independent kings, it is just as plausible that a single ruler oversaw the initial prosperity of Mycenaean Greece, perhaps more so when one considers the enduring concept of "high" kingship that seems to appear in the Homeric poems. For if Nestor, Odysseus, Ajax, Diomedes, and the other rulers of the Greeks preside over independent kingdoms, why do they follow Agamemnon to Troy, and how does he have the authority to threaten to take away their possessions and their land (*Il*. 1.135-9)? Why also is Agamemnon so frequently referred to as an *anax andrōn*[73]—a term descended from the Mycenaean *wanax*—in the poem, when there are plenty of other meter-friendly epithets for him?

By the time the Homeric poems were probably written down in the 8th century BCE, no one had an answer to this question of Agamemnon's authority. One solution to the problem was the legend of the Oath of Tyndareus, supposedly sworn by all Helen's suitors that they would honor and protect her marriage to whomever her father Tyndareus chose for her (Apollod. 3.10.9). But while later sources maintain that Agamemnon was able to gather and command the other Greek leaders because of the oath, there is no

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[72] Shear (2004) 43-5.
[73] While other leaders in the Homeric poems are referred to as *wanax*, Agamemnon is by far the one to whom the title is most frequently applied. Shear (2004) 77 counts 47 uses of the term for him, with the next-highest count belonging to Priam at 8.

mention of it in the Homeric poems themselves, and the oath legend only begins to appear in literature in the 7th century.[74] It is not unimaginable, then, that the ancients themselves found Agamemnon's authority over the rulers of the Greeks as puzzling as we do, and invented the story of the oath to resolve this confusion. For our purposes, however, the oath's absence in the Homeric poems is another indication that the political world depicted in the poems is a heroic version of the late Iron Age, upon which have been superimposed antiquated notions of high-kingship. It is possible that these concepts and terms are ill-understood holdovers from a much older Mycenaean tradition, one that originally signaled a supreme authority at the center of a large network of provincial centers of production and administration but that changed over several centuries, first into the regionally fragmented "kingdoms" of Phase B, and later into something much diminished from its earlier grandeur.

The poems might thus provide small but important clues for political developments in the Mycenaean world, and also contribute to possible explanations for both the Mycenaean world's prosperity in Phases A and B and its transition to Phase C, when regional fragmentation might have resulted in widespread unrest and fighting. Although we cannot know with any certainty what caused this shift, the parallel that can be drawn from our comparison of the *Iliad* and *Heike* and the institutional histories of Mycenaean Greece and medieval Japan is a weakening of the ideological support for the authority of central leadership by forces that both spread and enabled competitive warrior culture. As seen in the *Heike* and *Iliad*, the Japanese imperial throne and early Greek

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[74] It first appears in Hesiod's fragmentary *Catalogue of Women* (Hes., fr. 176 M-W). See Janko (2012) 41-3, who dates the *Catalogue of Women* to the early 7th century BCE, and Rutherford (2012) 152-67, who provides bibliography and examines intertextual relationships between the *Catalogue* and other early Greek poetry.

high-kingship were both likely supported by notions of divine sanction, but Japanese

acceptance of these authority claims was more widespread and enduring—even after the

emperors had been effectively stripped of their power to govern, the imperial family

persisted, and every shogun still sought imperial support for his rule because at least

some part of the ideological authority of the emperor endured in the culture of Japanese

rulership. As amply shown by Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, however, the ideological

foundation of Greek high-kingship did not age as gracefully. Whatever happened

between our hypothetical high-king at Mycenae and the other rulers of the Mycenaean

world, the break that occurred was permanent, even if the idea of high-kingship, which

remained tied to the word *wanax* in the centuries that followed, endured in memory and

song.

Yet despite this move toward regionalism, the now separate Mycenaean kingdoms

continued to flourish right up to the time of their downfall. New building projects

resulted in a host of residences and other structures outside the walls of Mycenae,[75] while

fortifications were strengthened and cisterns constructed there and at several other sites.[76]

Foreign and domestic trade continued—in fact, the best-attested interactions between the

Mycenaean kingdoms, aside from their possibly unified military undertakings in Asia

Minor that are hinted at in Hittite documents,[77] are economic exchanges.[78] As we will

see, these developments bear similarities to the prosperity of some Japanese provinces

that were controlled independently by rulers called *daimyō* ("great name"). Based on this

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[75] See Wace, Holland, Hood, Woodhead, and Cook (1953) 3-93; Wace and Desborough (1956) 103-31; Wace, Pakenham-Walsh, Taylour, Woodhead, Desborough, and Taylor (1955) 175-250; Shear (1987); Tournavitou (1990) 76-91.
[76] French (2002) 135-8; Crielaard (2011) 88; Hall (2014) 43-4.
[77] See n. 24.
[78] Killen (1985) 241-305; Palaima (1991) 273-310; Cline (1995) 143-50.

Mycenaean evidence and the odd, accidental preservation of the Linear B tablets,

however, it appears that whatever catastrophe(s) brought down the Mycenaean palaces,

there was probably little to no sense of danger among the *wanakes* of the palaces. Their

efforts to bolster the fortifications of their citadels might have been a natural response to

the increasing decentralization of the Mycenaean world, while the military buildup at

Pylos—possibly among the last of the palaces to be destroyed in the 11th century—

depicted in the tablets could have been a response to recent rumors of turmoil in the north

of Greece, where citadels at Gla and Thebes had already fallen to a shadowy enemy.

Phase C, Regional Fragmentation and Collapse:

The phase in Japanese history in which central authority seems to lose all

semblance of control and its bearers neither rule nor reign is best exemplified by the era

following the Ōnin War (1467-77 CE),[79] originally fought over a succession dispute in

the Ashikaga shogunate, which had replaced the Kamakura government in 1336 after a

brief, three-year return to imperial rule following Kamakura's fall in the Genkō War of

1331-3.[80] As conflict intensified and the Ashikaga proved unable to suppress the vicious

fighting, the Ōnin War quickly spiraled out of control, eventually leaving Kyoto (the seat

of the Ashikaga government) a charred ruin and the authority of the shogunate

considerably weakened. Although the Ashikaga *bakufu* continued to exist and assert

nominal authority over the warrior lords of Japan for another century after the Ōnin War,

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[79] See Varley (1967) for the best discussion in English of the Ōnin War and its sources.

[80] While the Genkō War and subsequent Kenmu Restoration might seem like momentous departures from the trends examined in this chapter, historians over the course of the 20th century tended to minimize the importance of these events in favor of the long-term trends that brought about Kamakura's fall, Emperor Go-Daigo's brief rise, and the Ashikaga clan's sudden ascension to the shogunate. For more on these events and this period, see Varley (1971); Imatani (1990a), (1992) 45-78; Goble (1997); Zollner (1998); Butler (2017) 159-61.

it was almost entirely ignored during this time as warlords around the country fought

private wars of vengeance and expansion. As such, the period following the war's

conclusion up to the time of the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603 is

called the Sengoku ("warring states") period.

In the early years of the Ashikaga *bakufu*, part of a period called the Muromachi

(1336-1573),[81] the provincial administration structure had transformed yet again: *shugo*

were partially replaced by warlords called *daimyō*, and *jitō* were phased out gradually or,

more likely, absorbed into the effectively independent states ruled by *daimyō*. This

process began with the fall of the Kamakura *bakufu*, for with Kamakura's removal, *shugo*

and *jitō* no longer had a legal guarantor of their holdings or titles—the Ashikaga

shogunate continued to appoint *shugo*, but typically from within their own clan, and the

influence of the *gokenin* class thus quickly died out in the first decades of Ashikaga

rule.[82] Although their functions were quite similar, one key difference between *shugo*

and *daimyō* in the Muromachi period was that *shugo* were appointed officials, whereas

daimyō was not made a formal office until the late 16th century.[83] *Daimyō* were thus

crude, unofficial *shugo*, who, operating outside the bounds of formal government

authority, obtained and held onto their territories and resources by force.[84] Another

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[81] Periodization in the Muromachi period of Japanese history is sometimes a complicated affair. 1336-1573 CE, the nominal dates for the Muromachi period, are intended to signify the reign of the Ashikaga *bakufu*, but contained within this span are two other periods: the Nanboku-chō period (1336-92), during which rival northern and southern courts both claimed imperial authority, and the Sengoku period (1467-1573), which signifies the effective dissolution of Ashikaga power and the rise of independent warlords, who paid little to no regard to central authority.

[82] Kawai (1977) 65-86; Imatani (1990b) 231-59; Nagahara (1990) 260-300; Shapinsky (2017) 145.

[83] For more on *daimyō*, see Nagahara (1981) 27-63; Sasaki (1981) 271-94; Birt (1985) 369-400; Berry (1986) 237-71; Gay (1986) 81-119; Yata (1998); Kurushima (2001); Shapinsky (2017) 142.

[84] This extralegal status did not, however, stop *daimyō* from attempting to obtain *shugo* titles from the enfeebled shogunate in order to lend legitimacy to their rule (Shapinsky [2017] 144). Yet we should beware of viewing this as a sign of shogunal strength, for if having the authority of a *shugo* was so important, it would seem unlikely that so many *daimyō* would have been able to replace or defeat *shugo* and still hold onto their territories and retainers.

difference between *daimyō* and *shugo* that stemmed from this lack of official sanction

was the tendency of *daimyō* to rely much more on extended family and personal retainers

to support their power.[85] While *shugo* had already begun incorporating *jitō* into their

retinues during the Kamakura period,[86] such ties were not crucial to the maintenance of

their authority; for *daimyō*, however, the absence of officially granted authority deprived

them of such a surety, and the organizations they controlled thus resembled much more

the familial war-bands of Heian-era *bushi* than the semi-bureaucratic warrior houses of

more recent centuries.

This stronger reliance on more traditional warrior ties likely originated from the

tight constraints upon *daimyō* assets and power. *Daimyō* were entirely responsible for the

recruitment and upkeep of their retainers, armies, and provincial subjects, which, given

the acquisitive, reward-focused culture of medieval Japanese warriors, meant that they

would have been under considerable pressure to furnish their men with a steady supply of

battle trophies, booty, and land—prizes that could only be obtained through conquest of

additional territory and battles with other *daimyō*. This also meant that retainers who felt

their *daimyō* were unable to defend their own territories or recognize the territorial claims

of their followers would frequently abandon their lords in search of more successful

masters,[87] a trend already seen earlier in the many betrayals and reversals of loyalty in the

Heike.

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[85] Miyazaki (1992) 435-67; Conlan (2006) 159-205; Spafford (2014) 281-329; Shapinsky (2017) 144.
[86] Mass (1999); Shapinsky (2017) 140.
[87] Shapinsky (2017) 144. Indeed, betrayals by retainers and vassals are so common in Japanese history that one would be hard-pressed to find a major battle whose outcome was not heavily influenced by the timely defection of a lord from one side to the other.

In addition to this lack of official status among *daimyō* and regression to less formal networks of power and influence, however, the attrition of earlier laws meant to prevent internecine warfare[88] and the Ashikaga's mishandling of the *gokenin* further encouraged *daimyō* to ignore the shogunate's edicts. The Kamakura *bakufu*'s primary method of controlling the ambitions of provincial lords had hinged on its ability to grant and revoke *gokenin* status, upon which a provincial magistrate's continued possession of his office and holdings was entirely reliant.[89] The irrelevance of *gokenin* status as a political tool meant that the Ashikaga government effectively phased out their only potential means of reining in the *daimyō*. With the Ashikaga bereft of any effective mechanisms for controlling provincial officials, *daimyō* were thus left to engage in frequent and open fighting with no threat of consequences from the shogunate. These conditions serve to illustrate how feeble the Ashikaga government was almost from its founding, an impression that is further strengthened by several examples of *daimyō* creating legal codes exclusive to their own provinces.[90]

The move from a more centralized system of administration to a regionalized one seems to have occurred much more swiftly in Mycenaean Greece, and the break with the center was likely more drastic and permanent. While systems of land allotment, taxation, and palace-controlled outfitting and leadership of soldiers similar to those found earlier in medieval Japan appear to have been in place at most Mycenaean palace centers at the beginning of the 13th century BCE, signs of variation between the different regions controlled by palaces also appeared by this time, marking a movement toward

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[88] See n. 16 for Heian laws and military warrants.
[89] Katsumata (1981) 101-24.
[90] Shapinsky (2017) 144.

regionalism similar to that seen later in medieval Japanese history. The material uniformity that characterizes Mycenaean Greece earlier in the Bronze Age disappears by the end of the 13th century, suggesting a greater degree of isolation and fragmentation in Mycenaean culture by this time,[91] and it is also possible that regional dialects had begun to manifest themselves in the text of Linear B tablets from different regions of Greece.[92]

This regional transition also appears to have turned violent relatively quickly: if regionalization did occur during the earlier years of LHIIIB, then the destruction of the first Mycenaean citadel at Thebes occurred less than a century afterward, between 1250 and 1230, followed immediately by the destruction of nearby Orchomenos and the abandonment of the fortress at Gla.[93] Probably not much later, the citadel at Mycenae was attacked and partially burned, and the fortresses elsewhere in the Peloponnese and in Athens seem to have strengthened their fortifications, likely in response to the turmoil.[94] Mycenae was mostly destroyed in 1190, however, and palaces at Pylos, Tiryns, and Midea appear also to have been torched and abandoned within the next few decades as well.[95] By the end of the 12th century BCE, most of the Mycenaean world lay in ruins, with only a few holdout sites in Argos, Athens, and the Aegean serving as homes for the

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[91] Uniformity in pottery, textile, and building styles is interrupted in the later 13th century BCE, and continued to diverge for centuries thereafter. See Sherratt (1980) 175-202; Mountjoy (1986) 93-133; Catling and Lemos (1990); Whitley (1991) 341-65; Boardman (1998); Thomas and Conant (1999) 15-17; Lemos (2002).

[92] Thompson (1999) 313-33.

[93] Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi (2001) 16-17; Lemos (2006) 505-30; Adrymi-Sismani (2007); Deger-Jalkotzy (2010) 388. Destruction was widespread in this period and not restricted to Boeotia. See Drews (1993); Cline (2014); Whittaker (2017) 75-81; Wiener (2017) 43-74. For destruction in the Levant and Near East, see Millek (2017) 113-40.

[94] Kilian (1980) 166-95; Iakovidis (1986) 259; French (1998) 1-5, (2002).

[95] Shelmerdine (1999) 403-10; Stocker and Davis (2014) 244-5; Lafayette Hogue (2016) 151-7.

much diminished population of Greece that would continue to dwindle with its first faltering steps into the Iron Age.[96]

The causes for these destructions are still hotly debated, with theories such as internal warfare, external invasion, natural disaster, famine, disease, climate change.[97] Many of these causes were probably not alone sufficient to bring about the collapse of Mycenaean society in LHIIIC, however, and many scholars currently accept the idea that, as with other regions in the Bronze Age Mediterranean, several factors worked in concert to effect the widespread destruction and decline seen in Greece.[98] Comparative evidence from medieval Japan shows a similar, if less devastating, uptick in mortality rates during the Genpei War and Sengoku period as the effects of famine, disease, and natural disasters were more keenly felt during this time when combined with warfare,[99] mostly, as shown above, because of the weakening of central authority and ensuing increase in regionalism that led to widespread fighting and impaired government officials' ability to respond to such crises. Given these similarities between the natural disasters, widespread

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[96] Whittaker (2017) 75-81. Morris (2000) 196-7 estimates that the population of Greece fell by as much as 75% between 1250 and 1100, with Messenia's population having declined by as much as 90% (80). Others place the population of Iron Age Greece at half to one third its Bronze Age level, noting that it is difficult to find sure signs of occupation in many sites throughout the Peloponnese (Dickinson [2010] 483-90; Wiener [2017] 63).

[97] Dickinson (2006) 43-57, Demand (2011) 193-219, and Cline (2014) ably survey and provide bibliography for the major theories.

[98] Fischer and Bürge (2017) features many articles focused on foreign invasion and climate change, but also touch on other theories, including 'systems collapse.'

[99] Population stagnated in Japan during 12th and 13th centuries, with radical weather fluctuations leading to three severe famines in 1180-2, 1229-32, and 1257-60: in some regions, nearly 25% of the people died, while the number of farming units in use shrunk by up to 50% (Farris [2017] 255-6); all the while the widespread fighting of this period led to further loss of life, among not only warriors, but also peasants whose homes were burned and possessions stolen to provision armies (Farris [2006] 59-66). The chaos of the 15th century had similar effects: bandit activity increased, and groups called *ikki* comprising commoners, monks, and samurai arose in significant numbers to cause turmoil in several regions; the depredations of these *ikki*, combined with those of the *daimyō* armies of the Sengoku period, made for significant loss of life (Farris [2006] 164-220), and the majority of those who survived appear to have lived in a near constant state of malnourishment (Farris [2017] 257-8). For more on *ikki* and the turmoil of the Sengoku period, see Katsumata (1982); Davis (1988) 221-47; Tonomura (1992); Troost (1997) 91-112; Kurushima (2001); Souyri (2001); Tsang (2007); Shapinsky (2017) 146-7.

turmoil, and political fragmentation seen in late-Muromachi Japan and Greece in the LHIIIC, a possible explanation for why the Mycenaean world was affected so severely by these upheavals could be that its recently fragmented system of government, like that of late-Muromachi Japan, was unable to cope with the stresses placed upon it.

But while earthquakes, famines, or other disasters might have aided the fall of Mycenaean society, who was responsible for the violence that appears to have destroyed so many of the palaces? Given the similarities between how the Japanese and Mycenaean systems seem to have devolved, and the competitive warrior culture that serves to undermine the central authority through which these systems were administered in both the *Heike* and the *Iliad*, we might posit a similar explanation for how the Mycenaean palaces fell: they were attacked not by invaders from the far north or by marauding Sea Peoples, but by men from the lower strata of the palace administration system, similar to how lower-ranking *daimyō* in Japan managed to destabilize and eventually overthrow the Ashikaga shogunate.

The *qasireu* is among the most attractive candidates for the upstart role in the Mycenaean system, as holders of this office may have been among the lowest in the administrative hierarchy and perhaps functioned as intermediaries between palace bureaucrats and the heads of villages, similar to the provincial officials of Japan that eventually evolved into—or were forcefully subverted by—*daimyō*.[100] If the *qasireu* of each region or province (the subdivisions of Mycenaean kingdoms are still ill-

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[100] Opinions on the possible duties of the *qasireu* and the office's role in Mycenaean society vary considerably, but most scholars agree that the *qasireu* survived the Mycenaean collapse in some way and then might have adapted over time to the leadership needs of the post-Mycenaean world. See Gschnitzer (1965) 99-112; Morpurgo Davies (1979) 93-99; Carlier (1984) 40-116, (1995) 355-64, (2006) 101-9; Hooker (1987) 257-67; Deger-Jalkotzy (1991) 53-66, (1998-9) 65-81; Wright (1995) 63-80; Ledjegård (1996-7) 371-8; Iacovou (2006) 315-35; Mazarakis Ainian (2006) 181-211; Palaima (2006) 53-71; Bennet (2007) 175-210; Crielaard (2011) 83-111.

understood) shared functions similar to Japanese provincial officials, the office would thus likely have involved collecting taxes and mustering for war the men of the communities over which they had charge, making the *qasireu* effectively a go-between for local leaders and the *lawagetas* at the palace. If this was indeed the case, these functions would also have given a *qasireu* opportunities to form personal relationships with local leaders and residents that were stronger than those of his superiors, much as bands of *bushi* formed warrior networks that were nominally connected to court aristocrats but ultimately bound together by local ties after provincial governors began outsourcing their duties to provincial warriors.

Building on this advantage, administrative officials with local connections might have also been able to lead villages and farming communities in uprisings, similar to how *daimyō* mobilized the greater part of their provincial populations to support their war aims. If similar phenomena occurred in the Mycenaean world, they might help to explain how heavily fortified palaces could have been taken without siege weapons. As established above, palaces seem to have shouldered at least some of the burden of equipping their troops: several tablets from the Pylos kingdom are concerned with the production of bronze in communities connected to the palace center, and another records large stockpiles of arrows kept in the palace complex itself in addition to chariots and bronze armor for charioteers.[101] These stockpiles are at odds, however, with the number of people who occupied the site, for the tablets lead us to believe that there only would have been around 200-250 adult males in Pylos itself, most of whom were craftsmen employed by the palace to produce luxury goods.[102] This would mean that the 800 men

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[101] See n. 56.
[102] Cline (2007) 190-200; Parkinson (2007) 87-101; Shelton (2007) 173; Small (2007) 52-3.

posted to watch duty along the Messenian coast and the 500-600 assigned as rowers must

have been drawn from elsewhere within the Pylos kingdom,[103] a practice we can assume

was standard for the rest of the Pylian military as well.

If these sources' depiction of a province-based conscription system is accurate,

officials like the *qasireu* were probably involved in the mustering of provincial troops,

which could have serious consequences should those officials decide to exercise their

prerogatives for their own ends instead of those of the palace. In essence, nearly any

provincial army would have been able to challenge the palace's defenses—which might

not have featured the massive cyclopean walls of other Mycenaean sites[104]—with relative

confidence of success, because that army would have comprised men from the very

Pylian communities who would normally have defended the palace. While the more

formidable fortifications of other Mycenaean sites might have posed a greater challenge

to attackers than those at Pylos, walls must still be manned to be defended, and the

relatively small palace populations would have been hard-pressed to repel large numbers

of attackers, especially if those assailants were from their own kingdom.

The idea of a locally mustered army led by one or more rebellious *qasireu* also

might explain the puzzle of why only some of the Mycenaean palaces were reoccupied

after they had been destroyed. In some cases, like at Thebes, Orchomenos, and Gla, sites

were destroyed and left in ruins, their attackers perhaps returning to the land whence they

came or moving on to seek new conquests. But at sites like Mycenae, two separate

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[103] For watchers, see tablets An519, 654, 656, 657, and 661 (Chadwick [1973] 188-94); for rowers, An1, 32, and 610 (183-7). Also Palaima (1991) 276-84; Wachsmann (1999) 491-504.

[104] It is possible that Pylos at one point was fortified in a manner similar to the other Mycenaean citadels: geophysical surveys in the 1990s found traces of what might have been a wall-sized fortification running along the side of the ridge upon which the Pylos citadel was located (Zangger, Thompson, Yazvenko, Kuhnke, and Knauss. [1997] 609-13).

phases of reoccupation followed the first and second destructive assaults, and the palace

was only abandoned after a fire destroyed its granary, likely one of the few remaining

advantages the site had to offer occupants.[105] Tiryns also seems to have been repaired

quickly, and new construction projects were even undertaken before its final destruction

and abandonment.[106] These unpredictable outcomes might indicate that upstart groups in

different regions had varying war aims: some might have attempted to establish a new

ruler in place of the recently deposed *wanax*, whereas others simply abandoned the

palaces and sought their fortunes elsewhere.

Beyond the apocalyptic picture presented by the archaeological record at the end

of the Late Helladic, power dynamics and violence like those imagined above are also

suggested by the status of authority and rulership—and the terms used for rulers—in the

Homeric poems. The central conflict of the *Iliad*'s plot is that of Agamemnon and

Achilles, in which the *wanax* Agamemnon, the ostensible high-king of the Achaeans,

tries to extract more than his due from Achilles, another, somehow lower ruler. Railing

against Agamemnon for his lack of martial worth, Achilles nearly kills the king, a

striking act of rebellion, but, after being prevented by Athena, chooses instead to secede.

Although the characters involved in this exchange may be fictitious, the basic elements of

Agamemnon's and Achilles's quarrel may preserve a historical pattern in the memory of

oral poetry. If the two men are imposed onto our hypothetical Phase B and Phase C

models, it seems possible that a conflict of this sort could have occurred between a

wavering high-king or regional *wanax* and a local official, who could have refused to

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[105] Kilian (1988) 134-45; Rutter (1992) 68-70; Walberg (1995) 87-91; French (2002) 135-50; Iakovidis (2003) 117-23; Adrimi-Sismani (2006) 465-81; Lemos (2006) 503-30; Harrison and Spencer (2007) 147-62.

[106] Kilian (1980) 166-95; Maran (2006) 123-50.

muster the men of his region for war or withheld them from some sort of campaign or expedition. Whatever the particulars, a secession of this sort would have sent ripples throughout the Mycenaean world, perhaps encouraging similar behavior from others lower in the hierarchy, especially if the palace centers of the LHIIIB had already set a fine precedent by breaking off from a larger, more unified kingdom into regional states.

The survival of the term *basileus* ("king, chief, noble")—frequently posited as the later Greek analogue for *qasireu*[107]—in the Homeric poems and in later Greek might be a curious hint at this quarrel scenario, for the leaders of the Greeks under Agamemnon are referred to as *basileis* (*Il.* 2.86, 445, 7.106, 344, 9.710, 10.195, 14.27, 379, 23.36, 24.404), as are the leaders of the Lycians (12.319). But if *qasireu* really were lowly Mycenaean officials, how did the term *basileus* then come to later mean 'king'? The idea that this is the Homeric poems' anachronistic application of a late Mycenaean conception of kingship is actually quite helpful in untangling the problem. Agamemnon appears to be trying to exercise the sort of central authority that might have existed in Phase A of Mycenaean history, but the other leaders of the Greeks largely ignore his orders, rather parallel to how any assertions of this type of authority might have been greeted in Phases B and C. Through their refusal of this higher authority, *basileis*, although once low-ranking officials in the Mycenaean administrative hierarchy, effectively assert control over their respective provinces of responsibility and in the process become what amounts to a small-scale king.

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[107] For general discussion of this equivalence, see Ulf (1990) 223-31; Thomas (1995); Raaflaub (1997) 633-8; Weingarten (1997) 517-35; Yamagata (1997) 13-14; Shear (2004); Iacovou (2006) 315-35. For the difference between *wanax* and *basileus* in Homer, see Gschnitzer (1965) 99-112; Drews (1983) 100-5; Yamagata (1997) 1-13; Carlier (2006) 101-9. Mazarakis Ainian (2006) 181-211 is against this conclusion. For discussion of *basileis* as post-Mycenaean kings, see Gschnitzer (1965) 107-9; Andreev (1979) 380; Morpurgo Davies (1979) 98-99; Deger-Jalkotzy (1991) 53-66; Palaima (1995b) 623-33; Small (1998) 283-91; Crielaard (2011).

Yet despite these possible Mycenaean survivals, the world that Homer depicts is still decidedly post-Mycenaean. Here the great warriors of the Greeks appear to live in scattered, self-sufficient households that maintain authority in their communities through a mixture of force, aristocratic largess, and notions of hereditary rule—gone are the great palaces and the administrative infrastructure that linked villages and provinces to the palace centers, gone, even, is the unity that made such infrastructures possible. That these warrior lords are sometimes called *basileis* could be an indication of the role that *qasireu* might have played in the collapse of the Mycenaean system, as local leaders called by that term might have assumed authority over smaller regional communities and, much like the *daimyō* who arose in similar circumstances in Japan, would have derived most of their authority from assumption, largess, and use of force.[108] It seems possible, at least in some regions, then, that the *qasireu* of the Mycenaean system could have instigated the collapse of the palaces, and, because their authority then would have rested almost entirely upon the gift-giving and combat performance displayed so well in the Homeric poems,[109] that they drove the Greek world to ruin through constant fighting and pillaging in an effort to keep their followers supplied with plunder.

This is an attractive explanation for a core cause of the Mycenaean collapse for several reasons. First, it might explain the pattern of decentralization and regionalism attested reasonably well in the archaeological record of the Bronze Age, which seems to

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[108] See van Wees (1992) 40-58 on the Homeric household and its political life. For differences between Mycenaean and Homeric political organization, see Thomas (1966) 392-3; Finley (1981) 218-21; Drews (1983); Carlier (1984) 211-4; van Wees (1992) 56-7. For the breakdown of vertical relations and rise of relatively horizontal ones between the Bronze and Iron Ages, see Humphreys (1978); Qviller (1981) 111-41; Greenhalgh (1982) 81-90; Andreev (1988); Donlan (1985) 293-308, (1989) 27-8.

[109] Because of their reliance on gift-giving and the problems seen in the *Odyssey* with Telemachus's inheritance of Odysseus's throne, some have argued that Homeric *basileis* resemble the 'big men' of Melanesia (Donlan [1985] 293-308; Whitley [1991] 341-65; Thomas and Conant [1999] 29-53; Carlier [2007] 121-8). For the original Melanesian framework, see Sahlins (1963) 285-303.

have persisted in the period of the Homeric poems. The reversal of centrally focused, vertical relationships in favor of regional, horizontal ones that encouraged this move toward regional fragmentation is a well-attested trend in Japanese history. There is thus a parallel between the turmoil of the late 12th century CE and that of the Sengoku period in Japan: both appear to have been brought about at least in part by the tension between central authority and competitive, acquisitive warrior culture, and that tension also seems to have endured from the 11th through the 16th centuries. In light of the *Iliad*'s display of a similar troubled relationship between warrior culture and leadership and the signs of regionalization and widespread violence in the twilight of the Mycenaean era, we might also posit that that relationship endured from the time of the Mycenaeans down to the isolated, regional chiefs of the Iron Age depicted in the Homeric poems.

Conclusion

We have seen how both Mycenaean Greek and medieval Japanese society might have evolved in similar ways through the often strained interactions of central authority figures and groups of warriors. This process spanned several centuries in both cases, but our sources for Greece are quite poor, leaving us with frustratingly incomplete records and physical remains for the Mycenaean kingdoms and subsequent Iron Age, as well as the Homeric poems, which are likely an amalgam of varying degrees for both periods. On the other hand, source material for medieval Japan is unusually abundant,[110] and the bitter struggle between the Taira and Minamoto depicted in the *Heike* is but a relatively

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[110] According to Farris (2009) ix, "sources are plentiful for Japan to 1600, perhaps even more so than for medieval Europe." Butler (2017) 166-7 agrees.

brief episode in a centuries' long weakening of Japanese imperial power that is well attested in other sources.[111]

It is through these sources and the insight into warrior culture granted by the *Heike* that we can see the endurance of the competitive warrior culture that so characterized medieval *bushi*—as *zuryō* transformed into *shugo* and then *daimyō* and, even before this, governing authority moved from the emperor's hands to those of regents, chancellors, and shogun, the competitive warrior culture depicted in the *Heike*, with its ceaseless demand for trophies, grants of political favor, and legal property rights, seems to have remained relatively constant. The *Iliad*, emerging as it does on the far end of the turmoil and strife that brought about the Mycenaean collapse and the enduring darkness of the Iron Age, does not serve in this way as an early source for later warrior culture as did the *Heike*, which was developed *during* the decline of central authority in Japan. But, because that culture seems to have remained intact through several centuries of drastic social and political change in Japan, it is not unreasonable, given the similarities in how medieval Japanese and Bronze Age Greek political structures appear to have functioned and changed over time, to assume a similar enduring quality for Greek warrior culture. In light of these similar trends and outcomes, then, it is possible that this competitive warrior culture encouraged conflict among fighting men in both societies and gradually shifted political authority from those who held traditional positions of leadership to those who could provide for these warriors' competitive demands—

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[111] Most ancient historians are (rightly) inclined to be highly mistrustful of epic as a historical source, but the role of the *Heike* in Japanese history is more complicated. Although certainly embellished with heroic battle scenes and Buddhist-themed stories of piety and the supernatural, it is important to remember that, as discussed in Chapter 1, one of the two main lines of *Heike* manuscripts consisted of prose histories of the Genpei War era, several of which represent the historical events of the period reasonably well. For discrepancies between the *Heike* and dedicated historical records like *Gyokuyō*, *Azuma kagami*, and *Gukanshō*, see Tokita (2015) 56.

generally regional and local leaders, who had the most immediate contact with said warriors. As such, the story of the degradation of authority among the Greeks and Japanese in these periods is one of gradual decentralization, a trend that made both systems of government and their subjects more vulnerable to large-scale threats like famine, disease, natural disasters, and warfare.

CHAPTER IV: RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS

In previous chapters, we have explored how the *Iliad* and *Heike* represent not only how warriors fought and governed in different periods of Greek and Japanese history, but also show upon closer examination the cultural forces that drove these processes. Outside these realms of ancient Greek and medieval Japanese culture, however, the *Iliad* and *Heike* and the singers responsible for their creation and performance also seem to have had a unique influence on certain aspects of religious life. This chapter will, then, take a somewhat different approach, looking less at what the content of the tales themselves can tell us about Greek and Japanese society and more at the role each tale and its performance by *aoidoi* and *biwa hōshi* played in its region's religious culture.

The *Heike* and other works in the Japanese poetic and dramatic traditions have a long and rich religious component: Buddhist ideals and influences permeate many of the *Heike*'s episodes, and there is much concern shown in the war tales and *nō* drama of the 14th and 15th centuries CE for the souls of slain warriors. Moreover, *biwa hōshi* were viewed as spiritual mediators who possessed a special rapport with both water spirits and the warrior dead, and from as early as the 10th century their predecessors—folk singers called *kataribe* and non-Buddhist shamans—had performed religious rituals meant to pacify both the dead and nature spirits important to agriculture.

Evidence for similar beliefs and activities in ancient Greece is considerably leaner than in medieval Japan, but there are some interesting similarities between the rituals performed by Greek and Japanese singers, and especially beliefs about those singers' connection to the gods and their possession of mystical powers. In particular, the prominence of blind singers—both real and mythical—in both traditions, the spiritual

power attributed to oral performance, and the importance of commemorating the deeds of

great warriors are all points of contact between Greek epic and Japanese war tales. As

we shall see, these elements of the tales not only fueled certain forms of religious

expression, but also helped the *Iliad* and *Heike* become political tools for the ruling elites

of Archaic and Classical Greece and medieval Japan because of their commemoration of

the past, which in turn influenced the manner and contexts in which the *Iliad* and *Heike*

were performed.

IV.1: Japanese Singers and the Spirits of the Dead

The very name *biwa hōshi* ("*biwa*/lute priest") carries with it obvious religious

connotations. As explored in Chapter 1, *biwa hōshi* of the 14th century CE were heirs to

a vibrant Buddhist musical-religious tradition that included performance of short tales

like the episodes of the *Heike*, sutras, and special chants. Moreover, many *biwa hōshi*,

such as Akashi Kakuichi, the creator of the *Heike*'s definitive version, were regular

Buddhist priests before losing their sight or taking up their specific brand of musical

ministry. Beyond these sorts of generic priestly functions and influences, however, *biwa*

hōshi were also heirs to a native, non-Buddhist tradition of narrative recitation and

spiritual placation. The first strand of this tradition came from the *biwa hōshi*'s

predecessors, the *kataribe*. These blind ritual narrators would recite the deeds of

deceased rulers at their funerals in the centuries before the Heian era (794-1185), possibly

as a way to placate their spirits (*Nihon shoki* Shucho 3/7/11, 30.8).[1] This ritual is

generally believed to have been an early manifestation of a specific type of spirit-oriented

cult called *goryō shinkō* ("honorable spirit belief"), which centered around the idea that

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[1] For *kataribe* and their ritual activities, see Ruch (1977) 305; Fukuda (1981) 1-18; Hyōdō (2009) 31-6.

the ghosts of powerful individuals could persist in this world to torment the living.[2] Also

tied to belief in *goryō* were native shamans, that is, figures believed to commune with

spirits,[3] who are thought to have performed several types of rituals for placating nature

spirits in addition to those for the souls of the dead.

While *kataribe* and shamans had distinct functions before the rise of *biwa hōshi*,

both possessed special traits that were believed to make them particularly adept at

communicating with spirits and performing *chinkon* ("spirit pacification"): for *kataribe*,

blindness and the oral recitation of ghosts' deeds were supposed to help them placate

angry spirits, whereas shamans, who were also sometimes blind,[4] would use stringed

implements like bows or musical instruments to ward off spirits.[5] Over time, however,

the spirit-placating functions of these two groups seem to have transferred to *biwa hōshi*,

who by the 15th century were strongly associated with placating warrior ghosts and, to a

lesser extent, nature spirits. Part of what likely effected the transfer of these variants of

chinkon from *kataribe* and shamans to *biwa hōshi* was that the three traits associated with

spirit placation possessed by the two groups had a unique intersection in *biwa hōshi*—

kataribe might have been blind oral performers, but were not known to use stringed

instruments, and shamans were not associated with oral narrative. As such, musician-

priests like *biwa hōshi* who had all these traits could have been seen as having extra

spiritual potency, since stringed instruments, blindness, and oral performance were all

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[2] Yamashita (1994) 54-69.
[3] For a more detailed history of shamanism and *goryō* in native Japanese religion, see Murakami (1970);
Hori (1975) 231-87.
[4] Hori (1975) 241, 279.
[5] Hori (1975) 280. Female spirit mediums, *miko*, were also known to use bows and stringed instruments
either to summon or placate spirits. For more on *miko* and other shamanic Japanese ritualists, see Blacker
(1975).

believed to have granted the ability either to compel or to gain rapport with the

inhabitants of the spiritual realm.

Traditional Japanese religion has long held that plucked strings, like those of the

biwa or even a warrior's bow, had the power to summon, compel, or drive off spirits. The

Heike itself even features several episodes that display this power at work. During a visit

to the shrine at Atsuta, for example, Fujiwara no Moronaga (1138-92) is said to have

sung and played the *biwa* so well that "emotion mastered the gods" of that place, and that

"the sanctuary trembled and shook" in response to his performance (*Heike* 3.16). Later in

the tale when Taira no Tsunemasa travels on a short pilgrimage to a shrine at

Chikubushima, an island in the northern part of the aptly named Lake Biwa, he is given a

biwa by the priests there (7.3). The goddess enshrined at Chikubushima, none other than

Benzaiten, the goddess of music and speech who is often depicted holding a *biwa*, is so

moved by Tsunemasa's performance that she fills the shrine with light and appears on

Tsunemasa's sleeve as a white dragon (7.3).[6] Not long after Tsunemasa's experience at

Chikubushima, the *Heike* tells of how Emperor Murakami (926-67, r. 946-67) was able to

summon the spirit of the Chinese *pipa* master Lian Chengwu with a *biwa*,[7] after which

the ghost taught Murakami a secret musical piece (7.18). The *Heike* also relates the story

of how the Minamoto clan's heroic ancestor Yoshiie once drove off a spirit that had

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[6] Benzaiten was also associated with water, probably because of its ability to flow in a manner
metaphorically similar to skilled speech and musical performance (Yoshino [1984] 207-10). Her
manifestation in the *Heike* as a dragon is thus fitting, given that major water spirits, like those of rivers and
lakes, were often represented as serpentine dragons (Bialock [2002] 270-86). For the historical association
of Benzaiten with *biwa hōshi*, see Hyōdō (1996) 171-92; de Ferranti (2009) 29-31.

[7] The *pipa* in its earlier forms closely resembles the *biwa*: both had four-to-five strings, a pear-shaped body,
relatively short neck, and were played with a large plectrum. Because of its associations with Buddhism,
the *pipa* likely came to Japan during the transfer of Buddhist teachings and other elements of Chinese
culture (including Chinese characters) that occurred in the 6th and 7th centuries CE. For the evolution of
the *biwa*, see Nagai (1990) 47-51.

haunted Emperor Horikawa (1079-1107, r. 1087-1107) for many nights by announcing

his name to it and twanging his bowstring (4.15). While these episodes feature several

figures from well before the *Heike*'s 12th-century setting, their presence in the tale is

nonetheless indicative that the belief that stringed instruments and weapons had spiritual

powers was sufficiently widespread to appear multiple times in popular works.

Unlike their use of stringed instruments, blindness seems to have had a more

mixed effect on the place *biwa hōshi* occupied in Japanese society, as it likely had with

kataribe and shamans. Popular Buddhist belief in medieval Japan maintained that

blindness was a form of karmic retribution for sins committed in a previous life, and the

blind were thus often shunned because of their disability.[8] Yet the religious blind, *biwa*

hōshi among them, believed that their devotions and activities as singers would cause

their sight to be restored, either in their current life or in the next.[9] This polarity between

the impurity of blindness and religious piety put *biwa hōshi* in an odd position in

Japanese society. On the one hand, their blindness led to them being seen as socially

repugnant, but also possessed of supernatural powers: in addition to a sort of second sight

that allowed the blind to see spirits and ghosts more readily, it was also believed that

these priests' blindness granted the ability to heal sicknesses or even foretell the future.[10]

On the other hand, *biwa hōshi* were still Buddhist priests, and thus possessed all of the

sacred qualities of that group. Because of this combination of negative and positive

attributes, *biwa hōshi* occupied an unusual social space that effectively put them at the

boundary of both mortal society and the spiritual realm—a position that, because of their

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[8] Bialock (1999) 80-3.
[9] Ruch (1977) 306; Groemer (2001) 350.
[10] Yokoi (1975) 295-334; Groemer (2001) 350.

powers gained both from blindness and religiosity, made them ideal mediators between

the mundane and the sacred.[11] But this position also helped strengthen in particular their

image as mystics who possessed special powers to commune with spirits and soothe the

vengeful ghosts (*onryō*) that were commonly believed to wander the land.[12]

In the tradition of the shamans who came before them, *biwa hōshi* seem to have

developed a specialization as performers of placatory rituals both for the dead and for

spirits important to agriculture.[13] Hearkening back to earlier forms of traditional

Japanese religion, the first *biwa hōshi* established themselves as an interesting mixture of

shaman and Buddhist priest who performed not only tales like the *Heike*,[14] but also rites

meant to placate the spirits of the earth (*jijin*), water (*suijin*), and the hearth (*kōjin*).[15]

These rites also seem to illustrate the unique crossover of ritual powers found in *biwa*

hōshi: blindness and stringed instruments had close associations with serpent cults and

water deities,[16] and *biwa hōshi*, like other religious singers, used vocal projection

techniques, shouts, and an idiosyncratic singing style whose magical qualities were

believed to draw the attention of spirits to prayers and other offerings.[17] Although these

rituals eventually ceased to be performed among *biwa hōshi* associated with the *tōdō-za*

singers' guild, they persisted among singers in rural areas of Japan such as Kyushu even

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[11] Bialock (2002) 286.

[12] Ruch (1977) 306; Kuroda (1996) 327-8.

[13] Bialock (2002) 270, 285.

[14] This is an interesting dynamic, considering that Buddhism managed to appropriate the power over spirits attributed to native Japanese shamans and shamanesses, thus limiting over time the role they played in Japanese spiritual life (Marra [1993] 49-65; Kuroda [1996] 321-51). The same sort of Buddhist take-over of spiritual power does not appear to have occurred with *biwa hōshi*, however, who instead seem to have simply combined the roles of instrument-wielding shaman and priest in a single personage.

[15] Yamashita (1998) 238-9; Bialock (2002) 285; Takami (2006) 5-12; de Ferranti (2009) 25, 129.

[16] See Bialock (2002) 270 n. 91.

[17] Such techniques can also be heard in the unique intonation of Shinto incantations (*norito*) (Ruch [1977] 305). Also see Philippi (1990).

into the 20th century,[18] a feature that speaks to the great regional variation of religious

practice in pre-modern Japan.

Because the performances of *biwa hōshi* drew on all these qualities, they thus

seem to have had significant religious and spiritual importance for their listeners.

Perhaps the most notable type of performance, however, was that of the *Heike*'s

numerous episodes depicting battles, heroic deeds, and tragic deaths and lamentations, all

of which were believed to serve as a form of ritual appeasement for the spirits of those

killed in the Genpei War because their commemorative function was supposed to have

been pleasing to ghosts.[19] We will see that *biwa hōshi* wielded considerable influence in

this arena of religious experience for several centuries, and, thanks to the combined

spiritual powers granted by their blindness, use of stringed instruments like the *biwa*, and

special vocal and singing techniques, were tied intimately to the ritual placation of the

ghosts of the Taira clan through *Heike* performance even into the late 19th century.

The *Heike* is replete with episodes that would have acted as a form of

appeasement for fallen warriors, particularly members of the Taira family. Two notable

examples come from the Battle of Ichi-no-Tani in Book 9, where many Taira nobles meet

their ends at the hands of Minamoto retainers eager to take their heads as trophies. Taira

no Kiyomori's brother, Tadanori, is among the first notables to fall after the tide of battle

turns against the Taira, and he is depicted fighting fiercely before being disarmed

(literally) and then chanting the *nembutsu*[20] until he is decapitated (9.14). Not long after

Tadanori's death, his nephew Atsumori, notable for his youthful good looks and

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[18] See de Ferranti (2009) 125-41 for descriptions of these ritual pieces performed by the *biwa hiki*
Yamashika Yoshiyuki in the 20th century.
[19] Discussed by Fukuda (1981); Hyōdō (1989) 65-9; Sunagawa (1990) 268-71.
[20] A chanted prayer to Amida Buddha. See Chapter 1, n. 89.

expensive attire, meets a similar end that proves so affecting to his killer, Kumagai

Naozane, that Kumagai feels impelled to become a monk (9.16). As will be seen in other

forms of placatory ritual, the structure of these episodes is also an important element in

their expiatory function. Individuals are introduced with dressing scenes that describe

their armor and appearance in heroic fashion,[21] their last moments are described in detail,

and the singer will often give sympathetic details about their pursuits outside of warfare.

In the case of Tadanori and Atsumori, Tadanori is a respected poet (7.16), Atsumori a

skilled musician (9.16), and both dress in the refined styles of the court nobility. Such

details are also meant to highlight the Taira's cultural refinement, a quality frequently

contrasted in the *Heike* with the coarse, unrefined ferocity of the Minamoto, which also

enhanced the tale's sense of tragedy and elicited sympathy for the fallen Taira.

But beyond individual instances of appeasement, the very text of the Kakuichi

Heike is also thought to have been assembled with ritual placation in mind. The Initiate's

Book (13), which recounts the fortunes of Taira women following the clan's defeat at

Dan-no-Ura in Book 11 and the execution of its surviving males in Book 12, follows

most closely the former empress-consort Kenreimon'in, daughter of Taira no Kiyomori

and mother of the young Emperor Antoku, who dove to his death beneath the waves of

Dan-no-Ura. In the book, Kenreimon'in, understandably dispirited by the annihilation of

her family, becomes a nun and goes into seclusion at Ōhara, a small shrine north of the

capital (13.1). The next three episodes of the Initiate's Book see Kenreimon'in reflect on

the fortunes of her few remaining friends and relatives (13.2), receive a visit from her

estranged father-in-law and arguable author of her misfortunes, Retired Emperor Go-

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[21] For dressing scenes in the *Heike*, see Chapter 2, n. 22.

Shirakawa (13.3), and decide that her destitution in exile is meant to represent the fallen

fortunes of the Taira clan as a whole (13.4). The last of these episodes also features a

brief summary of the entire *Heike* from the Taira perspective, which is capped by a

moving review of the clan's current sorry state in 13.5, the *Heike*'s final episode:

> The men captured at Dan-no-Ura had been paraded through the
> streets and beheaded or banished far from their wives and children.
> Not one remained alive or present in the capital, apart from the
> grand counselor Yorimori. However, no action had been taken
> against the forty or so women, who were still there with relatives
> of one kind or another.
> Even within their jeweled blinds,
> the lofty felt chilly blasts of wind;
> even behind their brushwood doors,
> the lowly watched dust shift in the drafts.
> Couples once pillowed side by side
> now were torn far from each other;
> parents and lovingly raised sons
> no longer knew where the other was.
> Affection remained as ever fresh,
> yet life offered nothing but sorrow.
> And all of this had come to pass
> because the chief minister, Kiyomori,
> had held the realm and the four seas
> before him in the palm of his hand,
> without fear of the One Man above [the emperor],
> without kindness for the people below,
> passing, exactly as he pleased,
> sentence of death, sentence of exile,
> in utter contempt of all the world.
> It was now clear beyond a doubt:
> The father's sins fall upon the sons. (*Heike* 13.5)

Reflective of the tale's opening lines, which bemoan how the mighty have fallen and

become as dust before the wind (all to the tune of the Gion Shrine's bells, which was

itself associated with placatory ritual for vengeful ghosts),[22] this passage not only serves

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[22] Kuroda (1996) 323-5 notes how some of the earliest attested instances of *chinkon* were those at the Gion Shrine, whence a sacred palanquin was paraded around Kyoto to ward off disease-causing spirits as early as 869 CE, a ritual that can be seen today as part of the annual *Gion Matsuri*.

as a poetically fitting conclusion to the *Heike*, but also, thanks to its summary of

Kiyomori's sins that are implied to have brought about karmic retribution on his

descendants, as a starting point for the ritual placation of the Taira clan. The distinctions

between the first lines of the passage, which essentially offer a brief summary of the

situation in spoken prose, with the second, recited part are striking, as the more ornate,

emotional language of the latter might also have been intended to draw attention to the

Taira plight and elicit sympathy and prayers for their ghosts. But while the process of

placation for the Taira had technically already begun in the tale itself through

Kenreimon'in's ascetic devotions and prayers for her family's enlightenment, the

attachment to the *Heike* of the Initiate's Book, which was not part of earlier variants of

the work,[23] is perhaps a telling indication of the tale's expiatory function for the Taira

clan—particularly since the Initiate's Book is believed to have been produced by *biwa*

hōshi, who were responsible for expiatory rituals for warrior ghosts.[24]

Several stories reinforce the idea that it was generally believed during the

medieval period that the ghosts of the Taira were in need of placation. *Gukanshō*

("annotations of a fool"), an early 13th-century historical treatise by the Buddhist priest

Jien, mentions that the angry spirits of the Taira had been roaming about the land in

company with other spirits and monsters ever since the founding of the Kamakura

shogunate, and that their desire for revenge had led to social turmoil and other troubles

for the living (*Gukanshō* 7.23). This seems to have been a particular concern in the 13th

and 14th centuries, for several other diaries, treatises, and letters from this period contain

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[23] While the exact date of the Initiate's Book's addition to the tale is unknown, it was likely created sometime during the 14th century CE. See Chapter 1, 54-6.
[24] Gorai (1965) 128-31; Mizuhara (1971) 144-63; Bialock (2002) 294.

frequent references to people's fears that the dead would transform into different types of evil spirits and cause problems in the mortal world.[25]

Finally, the long survival of association between the ghosts of the Taira, *Heike* performance, and *biwa hōshi* is displayed well by the story of a *biwa hōshi* called Hōichi the Earless in western author Lafcadio Hearn's 1904 collection of Japanese ghost stories, *Kwaidan*. The tale tells of how Hōichi is lured by Taira ghosts into performing episodes from the *Heike* in a cemetery at Shimonoseki, near the site of the Battle of Dan-no-Ura. Upon discovering the otherworldly origin of Hōichi's audience, a sighted Buddhist priest covers Hōichi's body with the text of the Heart Sutra to protect him from the specters, and when a Taira ghost comes to retrieve Hōichi for another performance, the sutra's characters mask Hōichi's body from the ghost's vision—all except for Hōichi's ears, however, which the priest had failed to cover with text. Enraged, the ghost rips the ears off and departs, leaving Hōichi safe from further visits but permanently disfigured. And so at least the memory of *Heike* performance as a form of expiatory ritual, as well as the idea that *biwa hōshi* were specially suited to its execution, survived into the early 20th century.

As a result of the special musical and religious attributes of *biwa hōshi*, the link between the *Heike* and ritual expiation, and the widespread belief that the ghosts of the Taira were in need of calming, *Heike* performance fulfilled a lasting expiatory function in medieval Japanese society. But the tale's religious significance extended beyond these purposes and even into the political realm. Because the ritual recitation of *Heike* episodes was believed to have had the power to soothe the angry ghosts of the entire

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[25] Listed and summarized briefly by Kuroda (1996) 336. See also Kuroda (1995) 3-30, 247-66.

Taira clan, it was also thought to have kept their vengeance at bay, and, in the first few centuries following the Genpei War's conclusion, to have served the important role of preserving from that ghostly host the Kamakura government established by the Minamoto. It is likely no coincidence that, as discussed in Chapter 1, the earlier reading variants of the *Heike* that arose during the reign of the Kamakura shogunate tended to emphasize Minamoto heroism alongside the tragic fall of the Taira.[26]

The overall focus of the *Heike*'s story on the rise and fall of the Taira clan, as well as on the resurgence of the Minamoto, also seems for several centuries to have been a useful political tool for the warrior governments of the Minamoto, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa. While the ritual appeasement of a destroyed enemy clan's spirits would certainly have been an important consideration for the Minamoto, the focus of the tale's overall narrative on the Taira in spite of their defeat by the Minamoto still bears explaining. For although the Kamakura shogunate was started by Minamoto no Yoritomo, actual power passed quickly from the Minamoto to the Hōjō clan after Yoritomo's death in 1199, when his father-in-law, Hōjō Tokimasa, became regent and managed through various schemes and assassinations to install his docile grandson, Sanetomo, as shogun. Sanetomo was the last Minamoto to hold the position: after his death, the rest of the Kamakura government's puppet shogun were drawn from a branch of the powerful Fujiwara family that had married Yoritomo's granddaughter, while the Hōjō continued to hold the reins of the shogunate until its collapse in the 14th century. Such an indirect arrangement was necessary because the Hōjō clan was, in fact, descended from the Taira, and their only male Minamoto relatives were the deceased

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[26] See Chapter 1, 56-64.

sons of Yoritomo, thus making them ineligible to assume the mantle of shogun themselves because it was thought that only a Minamoto descendant could hold that position—a frustration also experienced by powerful figures of later eras like Toyotomi Hideyoshi (the son of a peasant) in the late 16th century. As such, it is not impossible that the Hōjō would have welcomed the *Heike*'s focus on members of the Taira clan, since this would not only have had the effect of securing the ostensibly Minamoto government against the ill-will of Taira ghosts, but also might have promoted the Hōjō's parent clan.

For several reasons, however, the *Heike*'s popularity did not reach its true height until the early decades of the Ashikaga shogunate (1336-1573). The Ashikaga, another cadet branch of the Minamoto, would have had the same incentive as the Minamoto and Hōjō to ensure that the ghosts of the Taira remained calm. But the Ashikaga shogun also seem to have appreciated the possibilities represented by the ritual elements of *Heike* performance, and they became enthusiastic patrons of *biwa hōshi* through the course of the 14th century, commissioning them to perform episodes of the tale at ceremonial occasions such as new year celebrations, accessions, and state funerals.[27] As discussed in Chapter 1, Ashikaga sponsorship of the *tōdō-za* was instrumental in encouraging the spread of the Kakuichi *Heike*, and was thus responsible for much of its subsequent popularity. But a particular aid to the *Heike*'s popularity and its further entrenchment as a form of religious ritual might also have been the patronage of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the third Ashikaga shogun, who seems to have promoted the *Heike* and its ritual elements

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[27] Hyōdō (2000) 25.

alongside a similar genre of *nō* plays called *shura mono* ("matters of carnage"),[28] or angry

ghost plays, in which the spirits of slain warriors reenact their deaths for a terrified

onlooker.[29]

In addition to their role as entertainment, *shura mono* also effectively enact the

ritual appeasement of warrior ghosts, since the majority of the subjects of *shura mono*

plays are warriors featured in the *Heike* and other war tales. Perhaps the most notable

example of these theatrical rituals is the play *Atsumori*, which sees the ghost of Taira no

Atsumori communicate his sorrow and fury to none other than his killer Kumagai, now

called by his monk name Renshō. The number of other *shura mono* plays that feature

figures killed in the *Heike*, most of them Taira, is significant, and they include *Kanehira*

(killed in *Heike* 9.4), *Kiyotsune* (8.3), *Michimori* (9.18), *Sanemori* (7.8), *Tadanori* (9.14),

Tomoakira (9.18), and *Tsunemasa* (9.18). In accord with the highly formulaic nature of

nō plays,[30] which was devised and refined by playwright Zeami Motokiyo,[31] the majority

of these pieces also follow the same format as *Atsumori*. Each typically features the spirit

of the fallen warrior, attached to this world and unable to move on from it because of his

violent end, encountering a traveling monk, for whom the spirit either narrates or reenacts

its death; the monk will then offer words of consolation and prayers for the spirit's

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[28] Although "matters of carnage" is a relatively literal translation of the term *shura mono*, the phrase carries
with it several other connotations tied to Buddhism and warrior culture. *Shura* is derived from the word
asura, divine beings often associated with war and bloodshed who were also believed to have presided over
the Asura Realm in the afterlife, a place of eternal conflict where warriors are reborn to suffer for the
violent acts they committed in the human world.

[29] For more on *shura mono* and its performance contexts, see Hare (1986) 185-224; Rath (2006) 167-83.

[30] For the background, aesthetic principles, and dramatic structure of *nō*, see Ortolani (1990) 85-152.

[31] While Zeami was not the only author of *nō* plays, he is credited with creating its different "modes," *shura
mono* among them, and with delineating the unique aesthetic principles of the genre. Hare (1986) discusses
in detail Zeami's life and his influence on *nō* conventions and style.

enlightenment, and the play will end with the implication that the spirit has departed the mortal world or at least been temporarily pacified.

In fairness, the parallel between *shura mono* plays and expiatory *Heike* episodes like those discussed above is not exact, and the content of the plays differs from that of the *Heike* and other war tales. Tsunemasa, for example, has no dedicated death scene in any of the extant versions of the *Heike*, having simply been included in a list of those killed at Ichi-no-Tani, and the eponymous play therefore, instead of reenacting Tsunemasa's death, supplies a substitute with a clever nod to its absence in the *Heike*: Tsunemasa's ghost remains hidden from the monk Gyōkei throughout the play, and makes allusions to the episodes from the *Heike* in which Tsunemasa plays the *biwa* (7.3, 17-18)—his only appearances in the tale. These plays' apparent reliance on the *Heike* for the bulk of their content thus speaks not only to the popularity of the tale in the later 14th and early 15th centuries, but also to its influence as a ritual form, as the structure of the plays is similar to that of the heroic death episodes from the *Heike* discussed above. Although warrior *nō* plays skip for obvious reasons the description of a warrior's appearance (the warriors' ghosts stand before audiences clothed in fine robes and wielding ornate weaponry), they do feature, where applicable, a reenactment of his death, as well as a description of his notable pursuits away from the battlefield. *Atsumori* makes much of the young Taira warrior's flute playing, and, as mentioned above, *Tsunemasa* emphasizes the titular character's skill with the *biwa*, just as in the *Heike*.

While there are some differences between *Heike* episodes and the *shura mono* plays, then, they are much outweighed by similarities, and the plays seem to have possessed a placatory quality of their own—*nō* plays were known to have been

performed occasionally at shrines to appease spirits and petition deities to exercise their healing powers.[32] As such, the extension of the expiatory ritual inherent in *Heike* performance to the *nō* stage is a fascinating example of how this religious dimension of the tale, made popular by the spiritually potent *biwa hōshi*, could be expanded further through the Ashikaga shoguns' novel marriage of artistic patronage and the appeasement of the ghosts of the Taira.[33] This also had the effect of placing the *Heike* on a par with *Genji monogatari* as a classic to be performed in theatrical adaptations, which fit with the Ashikaga agenda of producing a hybrid warrior/courtier culture, and helped to secure the *Heike*'s place in aristocratic culture for several centuries thereafter.

Although *Heike* performances at state events abated for a time during the Sengoku period, particularly after the fall of the Ashikaga, the unification of Japan by Tokugawa Ieyasu and his founding of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868) brought with them a renewal of both shogunal patronage for the *tōdō-za* and sponsorship of *Heike* performance by *biwa hōshi* at ritual functions.[34] This displays well the tale's enduring religious utility and the importance, perceived by centuries of warrior rulers, of placating Genpei-era warriors' spirits, since the Tokugawa, like the Ashikaga before them, also claimed descent from the Minamoto and sought to placate the dangerous ghosts of the Taira to ensure their own harmonious rule. Even as *Heike* performance waned in popularity during the Edo period, Tokugawa sponsorship of the *tōdō-za* persisted, at least in part, because of the tale's important function in specific expiatory rituals for the Taira clan.

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[32] Ruch (1977) 306.

[33] For more on expiatory ritual in *nō* and its patronage by shogun, see Brown (2001).

[34] Katō (1974) 16; Hyōdō (2009) 160. The Tokugawa also resumed patronage of *nō* theater, which had remained popular among the warrior class even after the fall of the Ashikaga (Looser [2008]).

Heike performance thus seems to have enjoyed a long period of significance in Japanese religious life. *Biwa hōshi*, with their unusual combination of stringed instrument, blindness, and religiously influenced singing techniques, likely helped develop the associations between the performance of the *Heike* and ritual placation ceremonies. Their influence also shaped the content and structure of the *Heike* over time, and the Kakuichi-bon, the pinnacle of the *biwa hōshi*'s art, features many episodes and an entire book that seem suited to placatory ritual. This and other versions of the tale in turn were used by the Minamoto and their successors in the shogunate to strengthen the legitimacy of their respective governments by keeping alive the memory of the Genpei War—the Minamoto clan's finest hour—and by warding off the wrath of the departed Taira, a need that also helped to create an entire sub-genre of *nō* theater.

IV.2: Greek Bards and the Religious Dimension of Epic

Much like the Japanese, the ancient Greeks appear to have associated spiritual abilities with oral performance and blindness. Moreover, Greek epic also seems to have had associations with the commemoration of the dead. In addition to these parallels with the Japanese tradition, however, some other similarities seem to suggest that Homeric epic might also have had a placatory function like that of the *Heike*.

First, there is the association of blindness with *aoidoi*. With their membership in the guild of blind performers and depictions in artwork as blind men dressed in priestly attire[35]—even though we know not all were blind—the popular imagination of medieval Japan consistently conceived of *biwa hōshi* as blind singers and attributed to them the supernatural qualities of blindness discussed above. Literary sources seem to support the

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[35] See fig. 7.

conception that singers of Greek epic were also characteristically thought of as blind. The *Odyssey* features the blind singer Demodocus at the court of the Phaeacian king Alcinous, and the bard Phemius, who it has been suggested might also be blind,[36] is shown performing multiple times at Odysseus's house (Hom., *Od.* 1.153-5, 325-7, 17.261-3, 22.330-3). In addition to these examples from the *Odyssey*, there is of course the self-reference by the anonymous poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, likely the Homerid Cynaethus,[37] who mentions that he is blind (*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 165-73). Another, much later instance associating the blind with poetry and epic performance comes from Dio Chrysostom (40-115 CE), who mentions that all the Homer-admiring poets of the semi-barbarian Borysthenes were blind and that blindness was considered an essential quality for a poet (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 36.10-11). Outside the realm of epic poetry, the blind prophet Teiresias features prominently in mythology and literature: he plays a key role as the foreteller of Odysseus's future in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* (Hom., *Od.* 11.90-151), and also appears in several tragedies associated with his native city of Thebes in which he often foretells the doom of protagonists.[38] We thus see similar associations between blindness and special abilities in both medieval Japan and ancient Greece, and this relationship is displayed nowhere better in the Greek world than in the person of Homer himself.

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[36] Garland (1995) 34. Phemius is not explicitly said to have been blind, but he is shown doing some of the same things as Demodocus that would have been characteristic of a blind singer, such as being handed his lyre by an attendant (Hom., *Od.* 1.153-4). It does, however, seem more likely that Phemius is sighted, since his later interaction with Odysseus shows him as being aware of the impending massacre of the suitors and able to drop his lyre, run forward, and grasp Odysseus's knees in supplication without any assistance (22.330-53).

[37] For Cynaethus and the Homeridae, see Ch. 1, 37-9.

[38] Teiresias appears as a prophetic figure in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, as well as Euripides's *Bacchae*.

Figure 9: A blind *biwa hōshi,* dressed in the robes of a Buddhist priest, as depicted in the 16th-century picture-scroll, *Shichijūichi-ban shokukin utaawase emaki*. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Homer's blindness is one of the most consistent elements of his portrayal throughout antiquity in the numerous *Lives of Homer*, other works, and in the popular imagination.[39] Many ancient sources assert that the name Homer, which most of the tradition held was a name the poet adopted after losing his sight, was an Aeolic term for a blind man.[40] Regardless of whether Homer was actually blind—or even an historical person—his persistent association with blindness is still a helpful indication of how the ancient Greeks conceived of both poets and the blind.[41] Since blindness itself is believed in some cases to convey supernatural skill at poetry or the gift of prophecy, Homer's purported blindness and role in composing the two greatest poems of the Greek epic tradition seem to tie together both ideas, and signify his role as the supreme poet.[42]

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[39] See Ch. 1, 7-8, nn. 27-9.

[40] For Homer's name, its origin, and possible meanings, see Graziosi (2002) 51-89; Beecroft (2011) 6-18.

[41] For those skeptical of Homer's blindness, see Lefkowitz (1981) 23; Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth (1988) 349-50.

[42] Graziosi (2002) 160-3.

Indeed, Homer was thought to have "seen" the past and described it to his listeners in song, just as Teiresias "saw" the future and interpreted it for others in his prophecies.[43]

In addition to their frequently being blind, the *aoidoi* depicted in epic also seem to have had associations with funerals. They are mentioned as being present at one of the three funerals in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, although singing of the sort associated with *aoidoi* in the first instance occurs in the other two as well. Hector's funeral features *aoidoi*, who are said to sing during the rites (*Il.* 24.720-2),[44] while Achilles and the Myrmidons appear to fulfill this function at Patroclus's funeral (*Il.* 23.12-23) and Thetis and the Nereids do so at Achilles's (*Od.* 24.58-62).[45] Given that bards are only depicted elsewhere in the poems as singing at feasts,[46] their inclusion in funerals is striking, and could be interpreted as a special function of *aoidoi* that might have a religious significance. One potentially helpful clue comes from a brief mention by Hesiod of his participation in the funeral games of the Chalcidian king, Amphidamas (Hes., *Op.* 654-7), for while we do not know the content of the song Hesiod sang, he does say that he won a prize with a hymn (*Op.* 656-7),[47] a type of song that in other ancient contexts was used to praise or mourn men and gods alike.

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[43] Garland (1995) 32-5.

[44] Alexiou (1974) 102-3 and Johnston (1999) 101-2 insist that the singers referred to in these passages are professional mourners, but both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* use the word *aoidoi*, making them indistinguishable from the singers of epic who appear elsewhere at feasts.

[45] Dirges (*thrēnoi*) are said to have been sung at all three funerals, but we unfortunately have very little understanding of what set these songs apart from other types performed by *aoidoi*, since the only surviving examples are a few from Pindar and some highly fragmented verses by Simonides (see Alexiou [1974] 13-19, 104-8; Dalby [1998] 203-4).

[46] Most of the bards who appear in the Homeric poems do so at feasts, all of which are found in the *Odyssey*: Phemius seems to play whenever the suitors in Odysseus's house take a meal (1.325-60, 17.356-9), and fulfills the same role when the returned Odysseus holds a feast to celebrate their slaughter (23.129-48); an unnamed *aoidos* performs at a great joint marriage feast for Menelaus's son and daughter during Telemachus's visit to Sparta (4.17-19); and Demodocus sings of the Trojan War during a feast given by the Phaeacians in honor of their guest Odysseus (8.62-108). Apart from these appearances at feasts and at funerals, the *Odyssey* (3.265-71) also tells the curious tale of the unnamed bard discussed below.

[47] ἔνθα μέ φημι | ὕμνῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτώεντα.

It is thus attractive to speculate that blind *aoidoi* at varying times in the Iron Age and early Archaic period sang at funerals or during the celebratory games that followed them, perhaps in a manner similar to Japanese *kataribe* at the funerals of great kings and political officials in the early Heian period. Scholars are generally confident in taking Homeric funerals as exaggerated examples of actual practice,[48] especially because of Hesiod's connection with Amphidamas's funeral,[49] as well as the archaeological attestation of heroic-style burials similar to those found in the poems at an early enough date that they were likely not influenced by epic.[50]

Based on these aspects of *aoidoi* and the content from the Homeric poems, the parallels found in the *Heike* tradition might lead us to believe that performance of the *Iliad* had a placatory function for the ghosts of dead warriors—perhaps those who died in the Trojan War—similar to that of the *Heike* for the ghosts of the Taira. But this was not so, as there are several pieces of important evidence missing from the Greek world that prevent us from asserting such an equivalence. For if *aoidoi* did indeed participate in funerals around the time the Homeric poems were put into writing, this function appears to have been lost over time, and the *aoidoi* seem to have left these ritual functions to others.[51] Most important, ghosts in Greek society do not appear to have been considered

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[48] Roller (1981) 1-18; Antonaccio (1994) 399, (1995) 225.

[49] Coldstream (1976) 15; Roller (1981) 2.

[50] For a fairly comprehensive review of these burial sites, see Antonaccio (1995) 221-36; Karageorghis (2002) 227-37. The most notable is likely the burial at Lefkandi, which has all the characteristics of those found in the Homeric poems: one of the grave's two occupants was cremated—the site shows some fire damage, which is presumed to have come from a funeral pyre—and their remains wrapped in a decorated cloth and placed in a painted amphora; the amphora was buried along with many fine grave goods, a richly adorned female, and four horses; and the tomb was dug into the floor of a huge structure approximately 45x10 meters and the whole thing covered over to form a large tumulus (see Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett [1982] 169-73; Popham, Calligas, and Sackett [1990]; Lemos [2006] 505-30). For Lefkandi and other elite burials from Iron Age Greece, see Lemos (2007) 275-84; Lemos and Mitchell (2011) 635-46.

[51] In earlier funeral practice, songs called *thrēnoi* ("dirges") were sung by males, and are thought to have been formally composed songs of mourning. Female mourners emitted *gooi*, a wilder and less structured form of mourning song best described as a shrill cry (Alexiou [1974] 11-15; Holst-Warhaft [1992];

overly troublesome or dangerous until after the period generally depicted in the Homeric

poems, and the abundance of expiatory rituals, which included binding songs, curse

tablets,[52] and mysteries associated with death and the afterlife, do not begin to crop up

until around the 5th century BCE.[53]

As with so much else from the Iron Age and early Archaic period, the paucity of

source material means we must turn to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* for most of our information

about ghosts and the dead before the 5th century. The depiction of how the dead behave

in the Homeric poems is, given the setting and subject matter, surprisingly tame. Only

one ghost, that of Patroclus, appears in the *Iliad* to request that Achilles give his body

proper burial (*Il.* 23.65-92), and appearances of spirits in the *Odyssey* are restricted to

Odysseus's journey to Hades, which encompasses parts of Books 10 through 12, and a

depiction of the suitors' arrival there at the beginning of Book 24. The majority of the

dead that appear in the poems also seem to be relatively well-behaved for ghosts when

compared with the vengeful wraiths of the Taira or the spirits of later Greek history:

Patroclus, the only ghost to show up outside the underworld, appears to Achilles merely

to ensure that his spirit can receive full admission to Hades after his body's burial, and the

ghost of Odysseus's companion Elpenor, whose fatal fall from Circe's roof had escaped

the notice of his comrades (*Od.* 10.552-60), shares a similar concern with funeral rites for

his corpse (11.51-80). The dead in the poems thus seem to have a limited capacity to

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Johnston [1999] 100-2). Between the 8th century BCE and the Classical period, however, *gooi* seem to
have bequeathed their name to a class of male ritualists called *goētes*, who, true to their funeral-song
namesake, would primarily use songs and incantations to "lead up" (*psychagōgein*) and otherwise
command ghosts, as well as to persuade the gods to fulfill a patron's request (Johnston [1999] 101-11, esp.
n. 51).

[52] On apotropaic rituals generally, see Johnston (1999) 46-63. For anointing and purification, see Parker
(1983) 226-7; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky (1993) 34. For binding and cursing, see Parker (1983) 333-
48; Faraone (1991) 165-205, (1992); Johnston (1997) 165-94, (1999) 71-80.

[53] See Johnston (1999) 105-11.

interact with the living, as shown by the mass of ghosts unable to communicate with Odysseus before partaking of his blood offering (11.47-50), and those who can are chiefly interested in procuring a proper funeral for their bodies. These representations of the dead thus betray an overriding concern with burial and funeral rites, a sentiment echoed elsewhere in the poems by living heroes.[54]

The only possible appearance of ghosts that might be considered threatening in the Homeric poems occurs during Odysseus's journey to Hades, and it again displays Homeric ghosts' obsession with proper burial. Indeed, the first spirits Odysseus encounters in his underworld visit are those restless dead who have not gained entry into the underworld for various reasons, a group that includes young wives, unmarried men, virgins, and men killed in battle, still adorned in their bloody armor (*Od*. 11.37-41). Each sub-group of these spirits has at least one characteristic that was viewed later in the Classical period (480-323 BCE) as likely to make them angry or troublesome ghosts, who, much like the *goryō* of medieval Japan,[55] were commonly believed to have been capable of inflicting illnesses and madness on the living: they died either prematurely, violently, and/or without burial.[56] By these later standards, this group of virgin-bachelor-war-dead from the *Odyssey* should have done far more than groan at Odysseus, and their apparent inability to interact with or threaten the hero despite their restive existence is

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[54] Hector presses Ajax before their duel in Book 7 to return his remains to the Trojans if he loses, and promises to do the same for his opponent (*Il*. 7.67-75). Later, during Patroclus's repelling of the Trojans from the Greek ships, Sarpedon with his dying breath entreats his companion Glaucus to protect his body so it can be returned to Lycia for burial (16.492-501), and his Lycian companions are greatly distressed by the Trojans' failure to retrieve the corpse (17.140-68). Finally, Hector again shows concern over the return of his body to the Trojans when fighting Achilles (22.248-59, 337-42).

[55] Testimonia for these types of hauntings collected in Luck (1985) 213-82.

[56] For these categories generally, see Johnston (1999) 127-54; Felton (2012) 96-9. On the unburied, Bremmer (1983) 89-95. For those killed violently, see Rohde (1925) 178-80; Vernant (1980) 121-41; Parker (1983) 104-43. On the prematurely dead, particularly virgins, see Faraone (1996); Johnston (1999) 161-99.

strongly at odds with similar ghosts from the Classical period, who seem to have particularly relished venting their wrath on pregnant women and infants.[57] Fear of the unburied, prematurely, and violently dead in this later time is perhaps best typified by the third day of the Athenian festival of Anthesteria, when the spirits of the dead were believed to roam about the land of the living, and people would offer special meals to these ghosts and to Hermes, the god responsible for conducting the souls of the dead to the underworld. Lest those ghosts believe that these offerings were an invitation to stick around, however, the living would also smear their doorways with pitch to hinder spirits who might try to enter, and shout incantations at the day's end in order to get the ghosts to return to Erebus.[58]

While the poems thus show that heroic ghosts could return to the world of the living, they appear incapable of causing harm to mortals—even in the underworld, the restless dead are little more than diminished shades, and they must imbibe sacrificial blood even to speak with the living. It is also striking that many Homeric heroes are depicted dying not only violently, but also before their time and without burial, so, again, by later standards the Trojan War dead *should* have made for potent specters. And yet there is hardly any mention of Homeric ghosts in the Classical period. Their most frequent appearances are in tragedy: the ghost of Clytemnestra appears in the *Eumenides* to goad the Furies into pursuing Orestes for her murder; Polydorus, a son of Priam killed in the *Iliad* by Achilles, gives the prologue in *Hecuba*; and Achilles—from what we can tell of its fragmentary remains—delivers the prologue for *Polyxena*; While this is a much

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[57] Johnston (1999) 161-99.
[58] Parke (1977) 116-19. For other discussions of the Anthesteria and its rituals, see Bremmer (1983) 108-24; Burkert (1983) 213-30, (1985) 237-42.

smaller number of Homeric ghosts in tragedy than those that appear in *shura mono* plays,

only a tiny fraction of the tragedies extant in antiquity have survived in analyzable form,

so there were possibly many more plays that featured Trojan War-era ghosts. To this

end, the attestation of so-called "Charon's steps" in Greek theaters, which allowed an

actor to ascend the stage from beneath the orchestra, might indicate that ghosts did often

feature in ancient plays.[59] This is a fascinating parallel to the presence of Taira ghosts in

nō plays,[60] and speaks to an enduring enthusiasm for the figures of the Trojan Cycle and

their stories, despite the unlikelihood of Homeric ghosts' appearances in tragedy being

intended as a form of placation. Beyond these appearances, however, the spirits of

Homeric heroes rarely figure in festivals or rituals for ghosts, save for athletic games that

might have been envisioned as repeating funeral games for great heroes like Pelops and

Achilles.[61] The Greeks therefore at no point appear to have believed that the ghosts of

Homeric heroes were in need of placation.

Singers of epic do, however, seem to have had a divine connection, which, in

addition to the special powers attributed to their blindness, might suggest a religious

function. Moreover, Greek bards also seem to have possessed several qualities like those

of *biwa hōshi* that played an important role in the religious and political life of Greeks in

the late-Archaic and Classical eras, even if that function was different from that of *biwa*

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[59] See North (1992) 49-66. This device is, so far, archaeologically attested with certainty at two sites, one at a theater at Eretria and another dated to the 4th century BCE at Argos (Ashby [1999] 11).

[60] The striking similarities between Greek tragedy and *nō*, which include strict requirements for how many actors are on stage at a given time, positions occupied on stage and types of speeches given by those actors, and the role of choral songs, are examined in detail by Smethurst (1989).

[61] Several Panhellenic games were held to have originated as funeral games for mythical heroes, such as the Isthmian games for Melicertes/Palaemon, the Nemean games for Opheltes/Archemorus, and the Olympics for Pelops (see Antonaccio [1994] 399 n. 55 for bibliography; Ekroth [2012b] 95-137). Pausanias also recounts an intriguing ritual performed at sunset of the Olympic festival's first day, in which the women of Elis would honor Achilles by ritually mourning him (Paus. 6.23.2; see also Nagy [1979] 116). For heroic funeral games more generally, see Roller (1981) 1-18.

hōshi. As explored above, the Japanese of the medieval period believed in the spiritual power of stringed instruments, which allowed *biwa hōshi* and other performers and ritualists to command or appease spirits and appeal to the gods. While the lyre was often associated in ancient iconography with Apollo and Calliope (Hes., *Th.* 94-5), the Muse of epic poetry, in Greek culture instruments and their strings generally had no special power over spirits or anything else, but supernatural abilities instead often seem to have been attributed to the voices of musicians and bards.

Similar to later depictions of Orpheus,[62] then, singers of epic are seen in the Homeric poems and in Hesiod as having a divine power in their voices that is gifted to them by the Muses.[63] In his *Theogony*, Hesiod claims that the Muses were born "to be a forgetting of ills and a cessation of anxieties" (*Th.* 53-55), and they seem capable of passing these abilities on to mortal performers. To this end, the Muses are said to grant special gifts to singers, their servants (*Th.* 100), to "[chant] the glorious deeds of men of old and of the blessed gods who dwell upon Olympus," and that the man who hears their songs, although he "has sorrow and grief in his newly troubled soul and lives in dread because his heart is distressed," at once "forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these" (*Th.* 98-104).

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[62] Orpheus's entrance into the world of Greek myth was likely post-Homeric, since his earliest appearance is in the 6th century BCE, and he is mentioned nowhere in the Homeric poems or 7th-century epics. In these post-6th-century appearances, however, Orpheus is portrayed as having such skill at singing that he is capable of controlling plants and animals, and can persuade even the gods with his songs. In the world of ancient magic and spirituality, Orpheus was purported to have authored a book called the *Lyre*, which was supposed to teach readers how to use music to commune with the gods and the spirits of the dead (scholion to Verg., *Aen*. 6.119; see also West [1983] 29-31).

[63] The nine Muses (Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia, and Urania), daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the personification of memory, were originally associated most strongly with poets, but were later designated as patron goddesses of the arts, literature, and science who were thought to inspire and impart knowledge to practitioners of their various domains.

Both Homeric poems emphasize similar concepts. In the *Odyssey*, one of the Muses is said to compel the bard Demodocus "to sing of the glorious deeds of warriors" from the Trojan War (Hom., *Od.* 8.73), and Demodocus is also called a "divine singer" (*theios aoidos*) in the course of his performance (*Od.* 8.87). Even though bards are only present at funerals in the *Iliad*, the qualities of song are spoken of when the poet remarks in Book 9 that Achilles—notably not a bard—was found by Agamemnon's embassy "delighting his heart in a lyre . . . and singing the glories of men" (*Il.* 9.185-9). This is usually interpreted to mean that he was singing about the deeds of dead heroes, and it is the hope of every hero in the Homeric poems that his own exploits will one day be sung of after his death. What we see from these attributes, then, is a general association between singers, the Muses, and the divinely therapeutic capacity of epic that is meant to help even mighty heroes forget the pains of mortal life. That the glorious exploits of warriors like them are considered a remedy for the sorrows of other fighting men is certainly curious, but the implication that the songs about these deeds are given to bards by the Muses suggests an interest on the part of the gods that heroes be remembered for their actions.

Yet Greek bards in some instances were conceived of as not only being given by the Muses the ability to sing of the glorious deeds of men and gods,[64] but also of being driven to sing of them, as seen in the *Odyssey* when the Muse "urges on" (*anēken*) the bard Demodocus to sing of the "glories of men," the *klea andrōn* (*Od.* 8.73). This does not seem to be understood as a sort of spontaneous, involuntary religious experience— bards do not suddenly break into song like an evangelical speaking in tongues. In several

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[64] Nagy (1979) 95-100.

other instances in the poems, however, the poet directly addresses the anonymous Muse

and asks for her to aid him in his singing, so the Muses rather seem to grant a form of

forceful inspiration: the bard requests a certain song from the Muse, and the goddess will

provide it, occasionally deviating from that request with something she deems

particularly important. In the proems[65] of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for example, the

poet addresses the Muse in the first lines, requesting that *she* sing of the wrath of Achilles

(*Il*. 1.1-7) and the wanderings of Odysseus (*Od*. 1.1-10). The poet will then translate or

relate those songs to his audience. Such language suggests in both examples that the

divine Muse is the keeper of these tales, and that their recitation by the bard is an instance

of communion with the divine.

This idea is strengthened by the manner in which the poet invokes the Muses in

other instances in the *Iliad*. The lines leading up to Book 2's Catalogue of Ships run:

> Tell me, Muses who have homes on Olympus:
> for you are goddesses there and know all things,
> and we have only heard report of it and know nothing.
> Who were these leaders and rulers of the Danaans?
> I could not recount the multitude nor could I name them,
> not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths,
> a voice unbreaking and a brazen heart within me,
> not unless the Olympian Muses, daughters
> of aegis-bearing Zeus, recalled those who came under Ilium. (Hom., *Il*. 2.484-92)

Not only does the poet here address multiple Muses (perhaps to suggest the Catalogue is

so large that a single goddess could not remember it all?), but he also continues with the

idea that his tale has a divine source, and even says that his frail mortal body is incapable

of performing this particular episode without the Muses' assistance. Other invocations of

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[65] A term used often to refer to the opening lines of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both of which introduce the central conflict and overall themes of the work before launching into the story.

the Muses are similar: a singular goddess is called upon later in the Catalogue to tell the

poet which men and horses among the Greeks were the best in the host (*Il.* 2.760-2),

while all the Muses are invoked three more times in the poem, first, to tell which of the

Trojans challenged Agamemnon during his *aristeia* in Book 11 (11.218-20), second, to

reveal who among the Greeks first carried off spoils after their force had been rallied by

Poseidon (14.508-10), and, finally, to sing of how the Greek ships were set ablaze by the

Trojans (16.112-3).

The *Odyssey* features no other invocations beyond its opening lines, but continues

with the notion that song is granted to singers by the divine, as when Odysseus praises

Demodocus for his performance in Book 8 and wonders whether he learned the song

from a Muse or from Apollo (*Od.* 8.481, 487-8). Also, in the heat of Odysseus's

slaughter of the suitors, Phemius, the family's household bard, claims to have been "self-

taught" (*autodidaktos*) and to have songs implanted in his mind by a god (22.347-8),[66] a

quality that, he also seems to imply, brings with it a sort of protected status that would

cause trouble for Odysseus if Phemius were killed along with the suitors (22.344-6).

Additionally, Muses both singular and plural are invoked regularly in the opening lines of

several Homeric *Hymns* (*Hom. Hymn Herm.* 1; *Aphr.* 1; *Art.* 1; *Rhea* 1-2; *Pan* 1; *Heph.* 1;

Helios 1-2;[67] *Selene* 1-2; *Dioscuri* 1).

While this practice of divine invocation is almost certainly a formulaic element of

epic poetry, its endurance over time and consistent representation in several poems by an

untold number of singers suggests that the idea of a religious relationship between singer

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[66] θεὸς δε μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν.
[67] The hymn to Helios uniquely addresses the Muse Calliope by name.

and the gods should be taken seriously.[68] This is an intriguing difference from the Japanese belief that the stringed instruments and vocal techniques of *biwa hōshi* granted them supernatural powers. For while Japanese singers used their art to communicate with spirits and persuade the gods, Greek bards petition the gods *for* their songs, and instead they themselves are effectively portrayed as the gods' instruments, granting benefits to mortals through their performances while also fulfilling the gods' apparent directive that great deeds, mortal and immortal, should be remembered. In his plea to Odysseus, Phemius calls himself one "who sings to gods and men" (Hom., *Od*. 22.346),[69] and this sense of singers having an audience at once mortal and divine, coupled with the implications that they were used by the gods to perform the gods' songs and Phemius's implication of his special status (22.344-6), might also imply a degree of religious sanctity granted to *aoidoi*.

   The sanctified status of singers is also attested even in the one instance in the poems when a bard is harmed. In Book 3 of the *Odyssey*, Menelaus tells of how his brother Agamemnon had left in Mycenae with his wife Clytemnestra, who famously betrayed and murdered her husband after being seduced by his cousin Aegisthus, a bard to look after her. In order to have easier access to Clytemnestra's ear, Menelaus says, Aegisthus took the singer and abandoned him on a deserted island, presumably leading to his death (*Od*. 3.265-71). It is notable that Aegisthus, who in the mythical tradition had earlier shown no compunction about murdering Atreus, his uncle and adoptive father,[70]

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[68] Invocation of the Muses is examined in greater detail, with similar conclusions, in Diop (2011) 67-79. For possible invocations in the fragments of other poems in the Trojan Cycle, see Scafoglio (2006) 5-11.

[69] ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀείδω.

[70] All extant testimonia of Aegisthus's murder of Atreus are post-Homeric (see Dio Chrys. 66.6; Apollod. *Epit*. 2.14; Hyg. *Fab*. 87-8), and might have had their origin in a lost play of Sophocles. Yet nothing is said in the Homeric poems of Atreus's fate, save that Thyestes, his brother and Aegisthus's father/grandfather (Aegisthus was the son of Thyestes by his daughter Pelopia), took over rule of Mycenae at Atreus's death

and, later, Atreus's son Agamemnon, should go so far out of his way to avoid killing the bard outright. Similar to how unwanted or ill-omened children seem to have so frequently been exposed in the wilderness in other stories of Greek mythology,[71] the unnamed Mycenaean bard's abandonment by an unrepentant kinslayer speaks further to the idea of singers having some sort of protected status, since Aegisthus seems to have been concerned about the possible pollution he might incur had the bard been killed in cold blood.

Epic bards do seem, then, to have been tied to the gods and accorded a special, sacred status, and were also believed to have had special abilities because of their blindness. Although these qualities do not appear to have promoted the propitiation of Homeric ghosts, both lent themselves quite well to the commemorative function of epic, which itself might have held a certain religious quality. As discussed above, bards speak of themselves and their vocation in a way that suggests the gods were believed to play an intimate role in the performance of epic: *aoidoi* would regularly invoke the Muses to aid them in remembering their songs properly, and occasionally the Muses were even said to guide the bard's voice directly. *Biwa hōshi* seem to have placed great importance on remembering and recounting the final moments of warriors in detail, which was in turn supposed to enhance their ability to soothe those warriors' ghosts. It might be that Greek bards involved the Muses in their performances for a parallel reason: to ensure that their

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(*Il*. 2.105-8), which does not rule out the possibility that the myth of Atreus's murder was known in the later centuries of the poems' development per the model proposed in Chapter 1.

[71] Although a convenient-seeming practice for stories of vengeance and fateful coincidence, the practice of exposing unwanted children is but one of several ways one could get around incurring ritual pollution (*miasma*) in ancient Greece. Although it was once commonly believed that fear of pollution increased substantially *after* the Homeric poems reached relative maturity (Dodds [1951]), Parker (1983) dispelled this notion and showed that Homeric concepts of pollution were effectively the same as those of later Greeks (see esp. 32-73, 104-43).

recitation of the great deeds of heroes, the fame of which was supposed to have been

imperishable (*Il.* 2.325, 7.91, 9.413; *Od.* 4.584, 7.333, 24.196) and which also appear to

have been of great interest to the gods, was accurate and appropriate to epic.[72] As such,

the commemorative purpose of epic was not only important to the heroes immortalized

by its verses, but to the gods themselves, who were believed to have required that great

deeds be commemorated. But contrary to what some have suggested,[73] the religious

character of epic commemoration was not simply a way for bards to supply a reason for

their songs' existence (and need for patronage), since the commemorative function of the

Homeric poems also seems to have been used as a political instrument from the 6th

century onward.

    As Chapters 2 and 3 reminded us, the ancient Greeks were insatiably

competitive—the competitive culture enshrined in the Homeric epics spurred them to vie

with one another almost constantly, and also had a destabilizing effect on leadership and

authority. Even in the 6th century BCE, as much as two centuries after the *Iliad* might

first have been written down, the competitive spirit of the Greeks continued to thrive,

although the regional kings and princes of the Homeric poems had given way to city-

states governed by a variety of constitutional forms and, in some cases, by non-traditional

autocrats called tyrants. It was in this environment that the first historical instances of

state-sponsored epic performance manifested themselves, and this use of epic might have

been intended to reinforce a state's ancient prestige or lend support to a fledgling tyrant's

regime. This was possible most likely thanks to the religious associations of epic

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[72] For the importance of commemorating the deeds of heroes, see Bakker (1999) 17-26; Finkelberg (2007) 341-50; West (2007) 396-410; Beck (2011).
[73] West (2007) 400; Beck (2011).

discussed above: because commemoration of heroic deeds was pleasing to the gods and because of the special abilities singers were thought to have gained from blindness and their relationship with the gods, the tales of epic were viewed with the utmost respect and seen as divinely sanctioned records of the past. Although some city-states might not have been satisfied with the role their ancestors played in the Trojan War, the religious sanctity conferred on bards and their songs meant there was little they could do to alter the purportedly ancient narratives handed down by epic save for small details.

By the 6th century, then, epic poetry, particularly the *Iliad*, not only preserved and commemorated the great deeds of warriors, but also provided city-states with new ways to claim superiority over one another. Indeed, it appears that the accomplishments of Homeric heroes generally seem to have transferred in later centuries to the city-states from which those heroes set out on the Trojan expedition, rather than to individuals who might have claimed descent from them.[74] A good example of this dynamic is found in the centuries' long rivalry between Argos and Sparta, for while Sparta had some claim to Trojan-era cachet from the deeds of the Spartan king Menelaus, Argos derived substantially more prestige from its role in the Homeric poems. First, the assembled Greek host of the poems, often called Achaeans or Danaans, is sometimes referred to as the Argives, and, second, Diomedes, one of the greatest of the Greek heroes (and among the few to have survived the journey home),[75] led the cities of the Argolid against the Trojans. As such, the "ranking" of Argos was relatively level with that of Sparta, even

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[74] On states claiming prestige (*timē*) similar to individuals—and the complicated nature of that process—see Lendon (2000) 17, (2006) 87-8, (2010) 9-13, 41-2; Hunt (2010) 72-107, 185-214.

[75] The largest account of the Greeks who returned safely from Troy is found in Apollodorus's *Epitome*, which maintains that among the leaders of the Greeks, Agamemnon, Diomedes, Neoptolemus, Nestor, Philoctetes, and Teucer survived their journeys home, while several less-notable Achaeans made it as well (Apollod., *Epit*. 6.15). In the *Odyssey*, Nestor tells Telemachus that Diomedes, the Myrmidons, Philoctetes, Idomeneus, Agamemnon, and Menelaus returned to Greece alive (*Od*. 3.180-95, 255-312).

considering Sparta's military dominance by the 6th century, and the two clashed

frequently thanks in large part to the prestige-based conflict brought about by Argos's

ancient claims to honor and Sparta's more recent rise to power in the Peloponnese.[76]

In a similar vein, prestige derived from the Homeric epics also created difficulties

for major city-states like Argos when they attempted to order around other, smaller

polities.[77] The conflict between Argos and Mycenae in the 460s BCE typifies this

dynamic: as the de facto head of the Argolid's city-states, Argos was infuriated when tiny

Mycenae—by this time much diminished from its Bronze Age glory—refused to heed its

commands, the Mycenaeans claiming that the ancient honor accorded to their city by

Agamemnon, who had been king of Mycenae and leader of the entire Greek expedition in

the *Iliad*, not only placed them above submission to the Argives, but also gave them rival

claims to possession of the Argive Heraion and the right to conduct the Panhellenic

Nemean Games (Diod. Sic. 11.65.1-3).[78]

The Homeric poems' commemoration of heroes' deeds thus seems to have also

encouraged rivalries and provided city-states with more fuel to fire their competitive

spirits. But the relationship between the poems and Greek politics was not so one-

sided—because epic bards and their songs seem to have possessed a sacred quality, city-

states and individual rulers could increase their popularity and gain an additional form of

divine support through sponsorship of epic performance. This sort of interaction is

exemplified nowhere better than the Athens of the later 6th century, where, as discussed

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[76] The contest for rank among city-states is forcefully argued for by Lendon (2010), who speaks specifically of the consequences of Argos's and Sparta's wrangling (68-9). For the latter, see also Forrest (1960) 221-41; Roisman (1993) 69-85.
[77] On competitive aspects of Greek interstate relations, see Low (2007) 77-128; Hunt (2010) 215-36.
[78] Lendon (2010) 68-9, 89-90.

in Chapter 1,[79] the tyrant Pisistratus and, later, his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, are held to have sponsored the performance of the Homeric epics.

It is impossible that Hipparchus, who is credited with having invited the Homeridae to the Panathenaea of 522, could have predicted that his sponsorship of Homeric performance at the festival would eventually grant Athens substantial influence over the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But of the Homeric papyri that survive to our day, all show elements of the Attic dialect that are attributed to Athens' role as a center of Homeric performance from the late 6th century onward.[80] As we will see, this all came about from the Pisistratids' efforts to increase Athens's standing in the Greek world and, likely, to bolster their own popularity through the inclusion of Homeric performance in the Panathenaea.

Pisistratus (608-527 BCE), an aristocrat from northern Attica, famously rose to power through a combination of trickery and support garnered from the non-elite population of Athens and its surrounding towns. Since Pisistratus's regime was not based on an ancestral or religious claim to rulership, however, it seems to have been highly irregular: after seizing power for the first time in 561/0,[81] he was exiled in 556/5, and then returned for another stint between 550/49 and 544/3; after yet another decade in exile, he became tyrant for a third time in 534/3 until his death in 528/7, when he was succeeded by his son, Hippias, who ruled for several years. Far from a model of stability, then, Pisistratus's on-again-off-again tyranny was in desperate need of legitimation,

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[79] See Chapter 1, 43-5.
[80] West (1967) 11-13; Janko (1992) 34-7; Haslam (1997) 83-4; West (2001) 18-31. For examples of Atticisms in the *Iliad*, see Wackernagel (1916).
[81] Because the ancient Attic calendar began its new year in July, its dates are not entirely compatible with the modern calendar system. As such, dates attested in Attic sources generally must be given in these two-year ranges if it is uncertain whether an event occurred before or after July.

which he, like other tyrants of the time, sought largely through building projects and public works, sponsorship of the arts, and policies aimed at improving the lot of non-elites.[82] But in addition to these efforts, Pisistratus was also supposed to have been connected with the performance and textual tradition of the Homeric poems.

Pisistratus was, of course, only rumored to have sponsored the performance of the *Iliad* at the Panathenaic festival and to have altered the poem in order to give Athens a more prominent role in the Trojan War. The late dates of these rumors' testimonia alone make it unlikely that they were true,[83] not to mention the fact that the Athenian presence in the *Iliad* familiar to us, which is supposed to have been influenced by Pisistratus's edition, is nevertheless rather minimal and uninteresting. In all, the Athenians appear four times in the poem: in the Catalogue of Ships, the Athenians under Menestheus are said to have sent 50 ships to Troy, and stand in the battle line mingled with Ajax's smaller contingent from Salamis (*Il*. 2.546-8). When Agamemnon rallies the Greeks in Book 4, he passes by the Athenians without saying anything (4.327-8), and they are mentioned fighting among several other regional groups during the Trojan advance toward the ships (13.689-91). Finally, the Athenian leaders Arcesilaus and Iasus are among the many killed by the Trojans in the fighting around the ships (15.329-32, 37-8).

Yet the fact of a story that Pisistratus altered the *Iliad* essentially to fabricate ancient prestige for Athens is telling of the poem's potential influence on just such a

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[82] For Pisistratus's general approach to consolidating power, see Andrewes (1963) 100-15. On his promotion of certain myths and sponsorship of poetry and other art forms, see Hall (2007) 331-54; Zatta (2010) 21-62. For building projects, which seem mostly to have been outside of Athens proper, see Boersma (2000) 49-56.

[83] As discussed in Chapter 1, 43-5, the earliest mention of the Pisistratean recension dates to the 4th century BCE (Arist., *Rhet.* 1.1375b30), while the version of the story that has Pisistratus interpolating and reorganizing the *Iliad* in order to make Athens more prominent in the poem appears for the first time in Cicero in the 1st century BCE (*De or.* 3.137).

thing. Moreover, the idea of Pisistratus meddling with Homeric text is generally met

with disapproval in ancient sources, which might also speak to the ancient view that the

Homeric poems, despite their highly iterative and divergent origins, derived some degree

of inviolability from their association with *aoidoi* and the Muses. As such, the story of

the Pisistratean recension reinforces the idea that the heroic deeds commemorated in the

poems could grant prestige to city-states, that such prestige was valuable and desirable,

and that the gods, who were supposed to have ensured the accurate transmission of the

history of the heroic past through epic, would be displeased if deeds in the poems were

somehow altered.

Pisistratus is therefore unlikely to have altered the text of the *Iliad*, but might have

encouraged sponsorship of the poem's performance at the Panathenaea. Evidence of

Pisistratean association with Homeric performance does not first appear, however, until

the time of Pisistratus's sons Hipparchus and Hippias, who were supposed to have invited

the Homeridae to participate in a Homeric recitation competition at the Panathenaea of

522 BCE.[84] There are several points of interest in this confluence between Homeric

performance at the Panathenaea, the Pisistratids, and the Homeridae, but the one of

greatest importance for this chapter is the date at which this union is supposed to have

occurred. While the religious component of the Panathenaea was likely of a much older

date, the athletic and artistic competitions that comprised the Greater Panathenaea, held

every four years, dates to around 566, just a few years before Pisistratus's first tyranny

began.[85] This was also during a period when other quadrennial festivals modelling

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[84] See Chapter 1, 44-5.

[85] For the Panathenaea generally, see Neils (1993); Palagia and Choremi-Spetsieri (2007). For its origins and the beginning of athletic and musical competitions, see Davison (1957) 30-1, (1958) 23-42, (1962) 141-2; Robertson (1985) 231-95.

themselves after the older Olympic Games—which dated to the first half of the 8th century and included religious ceremonies, athletic games, and artistic displays and performances—seem to have begun cropping up throughout the Greek mainland: the Isthmian Games near Corinth and Pythian Games at Delphi were both supposed to have been formally constituted in 582, and the Nemean Games of the Argolid are dated to 573.[86] One key distinction between these festivals and the Panathenaea is that the former were all Panhellenic, that is, open for attendance by all the city-states of the Greek world, while the Panthenaea was ostensibly for only the Attic and Ionian. Hipparchus's sponsorship of the Homeridae and Homeric performance at the games might thus have been an effort to boost the standing of the Panathenaea, and, by association, its host city, relative to its Panhellenic superiors, which themselves were also once regional festivals that now featured poetry competitions. Such a deal would also almost certainly have brought greater prestige to the Pisistratids as well, and seems to have succeeded in increasing the standing of the Panathenaea, which in time came to be considered an unofficial Panhellenic festival in its own right.[87]

In this regard, there are several interesting similarities between the Pisistratids and the shogunates of Japan. Both the Pisistratid tyrants and the Minamoto, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa shogun were technically untraditional rulers: although shogun was a military position from the Heian period, it did not possess nearly the same breadth of authority as its medieval version, and tyrants, although somewhat common at various points in Greek history, were by their very definition a departure from traditional modes of Greek

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[86] The dates for these games and the events they featured are discussed in Kyle (2007) 94-149. Several were also supposed to have originated as funeral games for mythical heroes (see n. 60).
[87] Kyle (2007) 152-66.

leadership. Because of these backgrounds, both groups were in need of ways to garner popular support and signal legitimacy. For the Minamoto, the sponsorship of *Heike* performance both as a form of popular entertainment and as placatory ritual for the ghosts of the Taira clan proved to have been a reasonably successful way of reminding people of their victory in the Genpei War and of ensuring their regime's safety from otherworldly aggression. Their successors, now reliant on claims of Minamoto heritage for their legitimacy, enacted similar policies that helped *Heike* performance flourish and develop further as a form of expiation for the Taira. The Pisistratids had no ghostly enemies to placate, however, and so seem to have sought to use their sponsorship of Homeric performance at the Panathenaea to increase that festival's cachet and, perhaps, to commemorate Athens's own participation in the Trojan War as an acknowledgement of the sanctity of epic storytelling.

Conclusion

We have thus seen that in the centuries before the Classical period, *aoidoi*, who had a special relationship with gods and an association with blindness and the supernatural gifts it was thought to convey, performed at feasts, games, and funerals. These functions were similar to those of *biwa hōshi*, who possessed similar supernatural qualities thanks to their own blindness, use of stringed instruments, and singing techniques, although these associations also seem to have led to the belief that *biwa hōshi* were capable of placating Genpei War-era ghosts through *Heike* performance. Greek bards do not appear to have shared this function with respect to the spirits of those who fought in the Trojan War, but their special attributes and relationship with the gods, who were believed to have had great interest in ensuring that the deeds of heroes were

commemorated in epic, seem to have granted *aoidoi* and their songs a certain religious sanctity. This special status in turn made epic an authoritative source for the distant past in Greek antiquity, and the competitive city-states of the late-Archaic and Classical periods made use of these heroic narratives to rank themselves against one another. Also similar to the warrior rulers of medieval Japan, who had memorably won their right to rule by the slaughter of the Taira clan commemorated in the *Heike*, Greek tyrants seem to have used epic to prop up and gather support for their fragile regimes, which had several important but likely unintended effects on the development of the Homeric poems in the Classical period and beyond.

CONCLUSION

Few periods of Greek history are as compelling or perplexing as that spanning the end of the Iron Age and the beginning of the Archaic period. Emerging as they did from a double Dark Age—dark to them for the poverty of the time, to us for the resulting lack of evidence about them—the Greeks accomplished much in this epoch for which we still have little evidence or explanation. If the discipline of history is aimed toward supplying 'whys' and 'hows' for the 'whats' of the past, then its capability in early Greek history is severely limited. Foremost among the unanswered, and perhaps, sadly, unanswerable questions of this period are several related to the Homeric poems, which proved themselves inscrutable even at times to the ancients. The questions explored in the pages of this dissertation—how the performance and textual traditions of the Homeric poems might have interacted to generate the versions we have today, how the *Iliad* reflects the peculiar martial customs and leadership culture of Greece from the Bronze Age to the Archaic period, and how certain religious associations with epic bards and their poems affected those poems' performance and textual development—will perhaps never have any definitive answers. Yet there is value even in informed speculation: while we remain incapable of proving that the Homeric poems derive from an extended oral tradition solely by appeal to ancient evidence, the use of comparative traditions from across the world and throughout time have, at the very least, shown us new perspectives from which to approach some of the oldest questions in ancient studies and opened certain aspects of antiquity more clearly to our view.

This work has striven to do just that by making use of the *Heike monogatari* and its relatively source-rich medieval Japanese context to illuminate some of the darkened

corners of Greek history. Originating as a loose grouping of oral episodes sung to musical accompaniment by itinerant singers called *biwa hōshi*, the *Heike*'s evolution is characterized by interplay between this oral tradition and a written one, which was likely created in 13th-century CE Buddhist monasteries using oral episodes and court histories to form a more substantial tale intended for silent reading. These oral and written strands of the tale influenced one another throughout the course of their development, spawning multiple variations over the next several centuries, and this process found its culmination in the creation of the Kakuichi-bon, the "standard" version of the tale that is read today.

It has long been believed among students of the Homeric poems that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were also at one point subject to this sort of interplay between an older oral tradition and a nascent written one. Based on the comparative evidence of Parry and Lord, the poems probably originated sometime in the Iron Age in oral form as a group of related episodes, and other scholars have theorized that these episodes were shaped over time into a larger epic tale and transferred to writing sometime in the 8th century BCE. But, contrary to the opinion held by some Oralist scholars, I have argued that the oral tradition of Greek epic was not immediately snuffed out by the advent of written copies of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The model provided by the *Heike* tradition instead suggests that, while the original written poems were made up of several episodes grouped around a central narrative, it is entirely possible that new episodes continued to be composed by poets in the oral tradition and that those episodes were added to the written epics, perhaps over several centuries. The maintenance of these oral and written versions could have been overseen by Greek singers' guilds, such as the Homeridae and Creophylae (similar to the *biwa hōshi* guilds of the 14th century CE onward). The invitation of the

Homeridae to oversee the performance of the Homeric poems in competition at the Panathenaea of the late 6th century BCE likely represents the culmination of this oral-written dynamic. Finally, the Panathenaic Rule, which required that poets competing in Homeric recitation at the Panathenaea should begin at the spot in the poem where the previous competitor left off, requires at least some form of textual fixity by the end of the 6th century, at which point the written versions of the Homeric poems began to take precedence over the oral tradition, leading to the likely gradual decline of the latter and its demise by the 4th century BCE.

The oral-written model proposed by our comparison of the Japanese and Greek traditions thus suggests that, while the Homeric poems' main elements are likely representative of the period around when those poems were first written down—the 9th to 8th centuries BCE—it is also possible that episodes featuring aspects of 7th and 6th-century culture worked their way in as well. These later elements are manifested to some degree in the *Iliad*'s depiction of combat, which sees warriors vying with one another to be seen doing great deeds on the battlefield and highlights their deadly brawls over the armor of fallen friends and foes. These battlefield spoils are a central concern of the fighting in the *Iliad*, and heated struggles over the armor-clad bodies of the slain seem in large part to dictate the flow of combat throughout the tale. A parallel concern with the severed heads of enemies can be seen in the *Heike*, and the pursuit of these trophies dominates fighting there in a way quite similar to the *Iliad*.

Outside the tales, head-taking seems very much to have shaped the way Japanese warriors fought for several centuries, and, over time, stringent rules had to be imposed to prevent *bushi* from single-mindedly chasing after trophies on the battlefield to the

detriment of their leaders' tactical aims, which eventually led to head-taking's demotion to a chiefly after-battle activity. Greek combat from the 7th century BCE onward is believed to have been characterized by the massed pushing of the heavily armored phalanx, hints of which appear in the *Iliad*, particularly when warriors fight for possession of armored corpses. Similar to how medieval Japanese combat evolved in part around the need to regulate warriors' obsession with taking heads as trophies, then, it seems possible that the way the ancient Greeks fought was also shaped by warriors' desire to strip valuable armor from their slain enemies, which persisted even into the Classical period, and that the massed pushing of the phalanx, like the struggles seen in the *Iliad*, was in its origins a way to force opponents away from armor-clad bodies.

The competitive warrior cultures on display in the *Iliad* and *Heike* thus appear representative of premodern Greek and Japanese culture more generally, and a similar relationship between the tales and historical reality also seems apparent in the way leadership and authority are exercised. The *Iliad* prominently displays the often tense interactions of leaders such as Agamemnon and Hector with their subordinates and allies, interactions that show that, while an ideal of centralized authority exists in the Homeric world, in reality leaders are generally able only to persuade followers to obey their commands with offers of material rewards or threats of violence. The *Heike* betrays a similar dynamic between the imperial court, *bushi*, and lower-ranking warriors, and depicts a warrior class driven so strongly by their competitive and acquisitive culture that they run roughshod over traditional imperial authority and show little regard even for family ties.

This disregard of central authority in Japan is also seen in the course of its medieval history, which saw an intricate system of provincial land and tax administration gradually taken over by mercenary *bushi* and broken up into what were essentially regional city-states, resulting eventually in the collapse first of the Kamakura, then the Ashikaga shogunates, and then a subsequent descent into over a century of civil war. A similar landscape, with scattered, tiny kingdoms ruled by petty princes (if they can even be dignified by this name) answerable to no central authority, characterized Greece during the period in which the Homeric poems emerged. Yet the leadership structure of the poems, which differs from that of the historical Iron Age, might also hint at conditions in Bronze Age Greece, when the Aegean was spotted with the prosperous palace-fortresses of the Mycenaeans and at one point might even have been ruled by a single king. The administrative structure of the Mycenaean kingdoms, which bear several similarities to the system of provincial land-tax administration found in the earlier phases of Japan's medieval world, might thus also have been destabilized by the warrior culture depicted in the Homeric poems, as it is in the *Heike*, and that earlier culture's survival in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* indicates the possible scope of its influence even as far back as the Bronze Age.

Finally, the *Iliad* and *Heike* each seem to have developed certain religious associations that affected their development and the contexts in which they were performed. Much of this was owing to the special status accorded to Greek bards and *biwa hōshi* in their respective societies, since blindness and other attributes commonly associated with both groups were believed to have granted them a special rapport with spirits and the divine. While Japanese singers generally applied these abilities to the

ritual placation of ghosts through performance of the *Heike*, Greek bards were believed to have fulfilled the desires of the gods by commemorating the great deeds of heroes with songs like the *Iliad*. Because of these associations with the supernatural and divine, elites in both medieval Japan and ancient Greece seem to have sponsored the tales' performances in order to lend legitimacy to, and garner prestige for, their regimes. This relationship in turn seems to have affected the development of both tales, since the *Heike*'s associations with expiation ensured its sponsorship by the ruling elite long after its popularity had waned among the general public, and the *Iliad*'s place of honor in the Panathenaic Festival seems to have led to an outsize Athenian influence on the poem's written versions in subsequent centuries.

This work has thus examined a few different ways in which the *Heike* and its context can grant insight into the *Iliad* and its reflection of Greek history. But several other avenues of comparison remain beyond military, political, and religious culture. While Chapter 1 made some headway in comparing the textual history of the *Iliad* and *Heike*, there is still much to explore in this area. As has been noted in the preceding chapters, the *Iliad* and *Heike* are but single entries in their respective genres, and several other epic poems and *gunkimono*, each with their own unique textual histories, have yet to be considered fully. A study devoted just to a comparison of the textual history of the *Heike* and its companion pieces, *Hōgen monogatari*, *Heiji monogatari*, and *Jōkyūki*, with those of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, Homeric *Hymns*, and the poems of Hesiod could build upon the work presented here and help identify potential patterns in how these tales developed in light of their mixed oral-written dynamic.

Another possible comparative avenue to explore is the relationship, discussed briefly in Chapter 4, seen in both ancient Greek and medieval Japanese society between the tales and later theatrical forms, tragedy for the Greeks and *nō* and, later, *kabuki* for the Japanese. The artistic similarities between tragedy and *nō* have already been explored by Smethurst.[1] Yet we have seen that both Greek states and Japanese shogunates appear to have exploited the religious associations of the *Iliad* and *Heike* for political advantage. Moreover, several Ashikaga shogun played a decisive role in encouraging the growth of both *Heike* performance and *nō*. It therefore might be interesting to explore how Greek elites could have influenced the development of tragedy and its content, which frequently drew on the Trojan Cycle for its stories and settings, given how those elites already seem to have influenced the development of the Homeric poems.

Last, it could be fruitful to examine the limits of the competitive warrior culture featured so prominently in both tales. Although Chapters 2 and 3 show how both Greek and Japanese warriors in the tales tend to have little regard for anything beyond their own reputations and the acquisition of their respective forms of booty and battlefield trophies, there do appear to have been a handful of areas in which their typically ruthless, acquisitive culture gave way to more decorous modes of conduct. In particular, the Homeric poems are famous for their numerous hospitality scenes, in which strangers and even occasionally enemies will set aside differences in order to honor important social customs for how guests should be treated. In the *Heike*, guests and envoys are frequently met by their hosts with the trappings of a similarly elaborate culture of hospitality, even when those guests and hosts are sworn enemies. While there are plenty of instances in

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[1] Smethurst (1989).

both ancient Greek and medieval Japanese legend and history when guests were betrayed and the laws of hospitality violated, those laws still generally seem to have held, even in instances when one would expect competitive culture might lead to very different outcomes. It could thus be informative to examine what social mechanisms in the *Iliad* and *Heike* and their historical contexts appear to have kept these norms in place, as well as what commonalities might be shared by those instances in which hospitality is broken or not offered.

As these examples might show, the different perspectives offered here by comparison of the *Iliad* and *Heike* are just the beginning of a potentially rich vein of scholarly inquiry. Although the challenges inherent in this work are numerous and daunting—ancient Greek is hardly easy, but, for this author, Japanese *kanji* have proven far more formidable adversaries—the insights that might be gained from it are worth the effort. Barring the unearthing of a trove of miraculously preserved manuscripts of the Homeric poems from the 7th century BCE, we are left with a rather sparse body of evidence with which to explore and contextualize the world those poems depict. But we need not stick to just that evidence: as many earlier works have shown, the new perspectives offered by other comparanda are capable of advancing our understanding of the Homeric poems, and the right comparison, done in the right way, is capable of changing that understanding entirely.

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[*] In keeping with the standard practice for representing East Asian scholarship, Japanese names will be
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